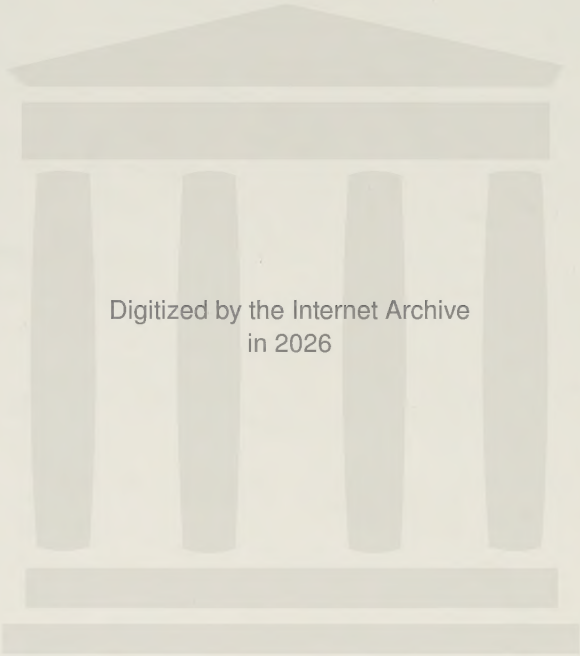
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THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE

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W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, M.A., LL.D.

Editor of "The Expositor," etc.

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE PROPHETS

VOL. I.—AMOS, HOSEA AND MICAH

BY

GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D., LL.D.

NEW YORK
A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON
51 EAST TENTH STREET
1898

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THE BOOK

OF

THE TWELVE PROPHETS

COMMONLY CALLED THE MINOR

BY

GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND OLD TESTAMENT EXEGESIS
FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.—AMOS, HOSEA AND MICAH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND A SKETCH OF PROPHECY IN EARLY ISRAEL

THIRD EDITION

NEW YORK
A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON
51 EAST TENTH STREET
1898

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PREFACE

THE Prophets, to whom this and a following volume are dedicated, have, to our loss, been haunted for centuries by a peddling and an ambiguous title. Their Twelve Books are in size smaller than those of the great Three which precede them, and doubtless none of their chapters soar so high as the brilliant summits to which we are swept by Isaiah and the Prophet of the Exile. But in every other respect they are undeserving of the niggardly name of "Minor." Two of them, Amos and Hosea, were the first of all prophecy—rising cliff-like, with a sheer and magnificent originality, to a height and a mass sufficient to set after them the trend and slope of the whole prophetic range. The Twelve together cover the extent of that range, and illustrate the development of prophecy at almost every stage from the eighth century to the fourth. Yet even more than in the case of Isaiah or Jeremiah, the Church has been content to use a passage here and a passage there, leaving the rest of the books to absolute neglect or the almost equal oblivion of routine-reading. Among the causes of this disuse have been the more than usually corrupt state

of the text; the consequent disorder and in parts unintelligibleness of all the versions; the ignorance of the various historical circumstances out of which the books arose; the absence of successful efforts to determine the periods and strophes, the dramatic dialogues (with the names of the speakers), the lyric effusions and the passages of argument, of all of which the books are composed.

The following exposition is an attempt to assist the bettering of all this. As the Twelve Prophets illustrate among them the whole history of written prophecy, I have thought it useful to prefix a historical sketch of the Prophet in early Israel, or as far as the appearance of Amos. The Twelve are then taken in chronological order. Under each of them a chapter is given of historical and critical introduction to his book; then some account of the prophet himself as a man and a seer; then a complete translation of the various prophecies handed down under his name, with textual footnotes, and an exposition and application to the present day in harmony with the aim of the series to which these volumes belong; finally, a discussion of the main doctrines the prophet has taught, if it has not been found possible to deal with these in the course of the exposition.

An exact critical study of the Twelve Prophets is rendered necessary by the state of the entire text. The present volume is based on a thorough examination of this in the light of the ancient versions and of

modern criticism. The emendations which I have proposed are few and insignificant, but I have examined and discussed in footnotes all that have been suggested, and in many cases my translation will be found to differ widely from that of the Revised Version. To questions of integrity and authenticity more space is devoted than may seem to many to be necessary. But it is certain that the criticism of the prophetic books has now entered on a period of the same analysis and discrimination which is almost exhausted in the case of the Pentateuch. Some hints were given of this in a previous volume on Isaiah, chapters xl.—lxvi., which are evidently a composite work. Among the books now before us, the same fact has long been clear in the case of Obadiah and Zechariah, and also since Ewald's time with regard to Micah. But Duhm's *Theology of the Prophets*, which appeared in 1875, suggested interpolations in Amos. Wellhausen (in 1873) and Stade (from 1883 onwards) carried the discussion further both on those, and others, of the Twelve; while a recent work by Andrée on Haggai proves that many similar questions may still be raised and have to be debated. The general fact must be admitted that hardly one book has escaped later additions—additions of an entirely justifiable nature, which supplement the point of view of a single prophet with the richer experience or the riper hopes of a later day, and thus afford to ourselves a more catholic presentment of the doctrines of prophecy and the Divine purposes for mankind. This general fact, I say, must be admitted. But the

questions of detail are still in process of solution. It is obvious that settled results can be reached (as to some extent they have been already reached in the criticism of the Pentateuch) only after years of research and debate by all schools of critics. Meantime it is the duty of each of us to offer his own conclusions, with regard to every separate passage, on the understanding that, however final they may at present seem to him, the end is not yet. In previous criticism the defects, of which work in the same field has made me aware, are four: 1. A too rigid belief in the exact parallelism and symmetry of the prophetic style, which I feel has led, for instance, Wellhausen, to whom we otherwise owe so much on the Twelve Prophets, into many unnecessary emendations of the text, or, where some amendment is necessary, to absolutely unprovable changes. 2. In passages between which no connection exists, the forgetfulness of the principle that this fact may often be explained as justly by the hypothesis of the omission of some words, as by the favourite theory of the later intrusion of portions of the extant text. 3. Forgetfulness of the possibility, which in some cases amounts almost to certainty, of the incorporation, among the authentic words of a prophet, of passages of earlier as well as of later date. And, 4, depreciation of the spiritual insight and foresight of pre-exilic writers. These, I am persuaded, are defects in previous criticism of the prophets. Probably my own criticism will reveal many more. In the beginnings of such analysis as we are

engaged on, we must be prepared for not a little arbitrariness and want of proportion ; these are often necessary for insight and fresh points of view, but they are as easily eliminated by the progress of discussion.

All criticism however, is preliminary to the real work which the immortal prophets demand from scholars and preachers in our age. In a review of a previous volume, I was blamed for applying a prophecy of Isaiah to a problem of our own day. This was called "prostituting prophecy." *The* prostitution of the prophets is their confinement to academic uses. One cannot conceive an ending, at once more pathetic and more ridiculous, to those great streams of living water, than to allow them to run out in the sands of criticism and exegesis, however golden these sands may be. The prophets spoke for a practical purpose ; they aimed at the hearts of men ; and everything that scholarship can do for their writings has surely for its final aim the illustration of their witness to the ways of God with men, and its application to living questions and duties and hopes. Besides, therefore, seeking to tell the story of that wonderful stage in the history of the human spirit—surely next in wonder to the story of Christ Himself—I have not feared at every suitable point to apply its truths to our lives to-day. The civilisation in which prophecy flourished was in its essentials marvellously like our own. To mark only one point, the rise of prophecy

in Israel came fast upon the passage of the nation from an agricultural to a commercial basis of society, and upon the appearance of the very thing which gives its name to civilisation—city-life, with its unchanging sins, problems and ideals.

A recent Dutch critic, whose exact scholarship is known to all readers of Stade's *Journal of Old Testament Science*, has said of Amos and Hosea: "These prophecies have a word of God, as for all times, so also especially for our own. Before all it is relevant to 'the social question' of our day, to the relation of religion and morality. . . . Often it has been hard for me to refrain from expressly pointing out the agreement between Then and To-day."[1] This feeling will be shared by all students of prophecy whose minds and consciences are quick; and I welcome the liberal plan of the series in which this volume appears, because, while giving room for the adequate discussion of critical and historical questions, its chief design is to show the eternal validity of the Books of the Bible as the Word of God, and their meaning for ourselves to-day.

Previous works on the Minor Prophets are almost innumerable. Those to which I owe most will be found indicated in the footnotes. The translation has been executed upon the purpose, not to sacrifice the

[1] J. J. P. Valeton, jun., *Amos en Hosea*, 1894: quoted by Budde in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, September, 1894.

literal meaning or exact emphasis of the original to the frequent possibility of greater elegance. It reproduces every word, with the occasional exception of a copula. With some hesitation I have retained the traditional spelling of the Divine Name, Jehovah, instead of the more correct Jahve or Yahweh; but where the rhythm of certain familiar passages was disturbed by it, I have followed the English versions and written LORD. The reader will keep in mind that a line may be destroyed by substituting our pronunciation of proper names for the more musical accents of the original. Thus, for instance, we obliterate the music of "Isra'el" by making it two syllables and putting the accent on the first: it has three syllables with the accent on the last. We crush Yerushalayîm into Jerúsalem; we shred off Asshûr into Assyria, and dub Miṣraîm Egypt. Hebrew has too few of the combinations which sound most musical to our ears, to afford the suppression of any one of them.

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INTRODUCTION

Καὶ τῶν ιβ′ προφητῶν τὰ ὀστᾶ
ἀναθάλοι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῶν,
Παρεκάλεσαν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβ
καὶ ἐλυτρώσαντο αὐτοὺς ἐν πίστει ἐλπίδος.

And of the Twelve Prophets may the bones
Flourish again from their place,
For they comforted Jacob
And redeemed them by the assurance of hope.

Ecclesiasticus xlix. 10.

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

IN the order of our English Bible the Minor Prophets, as they are usually called, form the last twelve books of the Old Testament. They are immediately preceded by Daniel, and before him by the three Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah (with Lamentations) and Ezekiel. Why all sixteen were thus gathered at the end of the other sacred books, we do not know. Perhaps, because it was held fitting that prophecy should occupy the last outposts of the Old Testament towards the New.

In the Hebrew Bible, however, the order differs, and is much more significant. The Prophets[1] form the second division of the threefold Canon: Law, Prophets and Writings; and Daniel is not among them. The Minor follow immediately after Ezekiel. Moreover, they are not twelve books, but one. They are gathered under the common title *Book of the Twelve*;[2] and although each of them has the usual colophon detailing the number of its own verses, there is also

---

[1] Including, of course, the historical books, Joshua to 2 Kings, which were known as "the Former Prophets"; while what we call the prophets Isaiah to Malachi were known as "the Latter."

[2] ספר תרי עשר, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew שנים עשר, which appears with the other in the colophon to the book. A later contraction is תריסר. This is the form transliterated in Epiphanius: δαθαριασαρα.

one colophon for all the twelve, placed at the end of Malachi and reckoning the sum of their verses from the first of Hosea onwards. This unity, which there is reason to suppose was given to them before their reception into the Canon,[1] they have never since lost. However much their place has changed in the order of the books of the Old Testament, however much their own internal arrangement has differed, the Twelve have always stood together. There has been every temptation to scatter them because of their various dates. Yet they never have been scattered; and in spite of the fact that they have not preserved their common title in any Bible outside the Hebrew, that title has lived on in literature and common talk. Thus the Greek canon omits it; but Greek Jews and Christians always counted the books as one volume,[2] calling them "The Twelve Prophets," or "The Twelve-Prophet" Book.[3] It was the Latins who designated them "The Minor Prophets": "on account of their brevity as compared with those who are called the Major because of their ampler volumes."[4] And this name has passed into most modern languages,[5] including our own. But

[1] See Ryle, *Canon of the O.T.*, p. 105

[2] So Josephus, *Contra Apion*, i. 8 (*circa* 90 A.D.), reckons the prophetical books as thirteen, of which the Minor Prophets could only have been counted as one—whatever the other twelve may have been. Melito of Sardis (*c.* 170), quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 26), speaks of *τῶν δώδεκα ἐν μονοβίβλῳ*. To Origen (*c.* 250: apud Ibid., vi. 25) they could only have been one out of the twenty-two he gives for the O.T. Cf. Jerome (*Prolog. Galeatus*), "Liber duodecim Prophetarum.

[3] *Οἱ Δώδεκα Προφῆται*: Jesus son of Sirach xlix. 10; *Τὸ δωδεκαπρόφητον*.

[4] Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 29: cf. Jerome, *Proem. in Esaiam*.

[5] The German usage generally preserves the numeral, "Die zwölf kleinen Propheten."

surely it is better to revert to the original, canonical and unambiguous title of "The Twelve."

The collection and arrangement of "The Twelve" are matters of obscurity, from which, however, three or four facts emerge that are tolerably certain. The inseparableness of the books is a proof of the ancient date of their union. They must have been put together before they were received into the Canon. The Canon of the Prophets—Joshua to Second Kings and Isaiah to Malachi—was closed by 200 B.C. at the latest, and perhaps as early as 250; but if we have (as seems probable) portions of "The Twelve,"[1] which must be assigned to a little later than 300, this may be held to prove that the whole collection cannot have long preceded the fixing of the Canon of the Prophets. On the other hand, the fact that these latest pieces have not been placed under a title of their own, but are attached to the Book of Zechariah, is pretty sufficient evidence that they were added after the collection and fixture of twelve books—a round number which there would be every disposition not to disturb. That would give us for the date of the first edition (so to speak) of our Twelve some year before 300; and for the date of the second edition some year towards 250. This is a question, however, which may be reserved for final decision after we have examined the date of the separate books, and especially of Joel and the second half of Zechariah. That there was a previous collection, as early as the Exile, of the books written before then, may be regarded as more than probable. But we have no means of fixing its exact limits. Why the Twelve were all ultimately put together is reasonably suggested by

[1] See Vol. II. on Zech. ix. ff.

Jewish writers. They are small, and, as separate rolls, might have been lost.[1] It is possible that the desire of the round number twelve is responsible for the admission of Jonah, a book very different in form from all the others; just as we have hinted that the fact of there being already twelve may account for the attachment of the late fragments to the Book of Zechariah. But all this is only to guess, where we have no means of certain knowledge.

"The Book of the Twelve" has not always held the place which it now occupies in the Hebrew Canon, at the end of the Prophets. The rabbis taught that Hosea, but for the comparative smallness of his prophecy, should have stood first of all the writing prophets, of whom they regarded him as the oldest.[2] And doubtless it was for the same chronological reasons, that early Christian catalogues of the Scriptures, and various editions of the Septuagint, placed the whole of "The Twelve" in front of Isaiah.[3]

The internal arrangement of "The Twelve" in our English Bible is the same as that of the Hebrew Canon, and was probably determined by what the compilers thought to be the respective ages of the books. Thus, first we have six, all supposed to be of the earlier Assyrian period, before 700—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah; then three from the late Assyrian and the Babylonian periods—Nahum, Habbakuk and Zephaniah; and then three from the

[1] *Talmud:* Baba Bathra, 14*a*: cf. Rashi's Commentary.

[2] *Talmud, ibid.*

[3] So the Codices Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, but not Cod. Sin. So also Cyril of Jerusalem († 386), Athanasius (365), Gregory Naz. († 390), and the spurious Canon of the Council of Laodicea (*c.* 400) and Epiphanius (403). See Ryle, *Canon of the O.T.*, 215 ff.

Persian period after the Exile—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The Septuagint have altered the order of the first six, arranging Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel and Obadiah according to their size, and setting Jonah after them, probably because of his different form. The remaining six are left as in the Hebrew.

Recent criticism, however, has made it clear that the Biblical order of "The Twelve Prophets" is no more than a very rough approximation to the order of their real dates; and, as it is obviously best for us to follow in their historical succession prophecies, which illustrate the whole history of prophecy from its rise with Amos to its fall with Malachi and his successors, I propose to do this. Detailed proofs of the separate dates must be left to each book. All that is needful here is a general statement of the order.

Of the first six prophets the dates of Amos, Hosea, and Micah (but of the latter's book in part only) are certain. The Jews have been able to defend Hosea's priority only on fanciful grounds.[1] Whether or not he quotes from Amos, his historical allusions are more recent. With the exception of a few fragments incorporated by later authors, the Book of Amos is thus the earliest example of prophetic literature, and we take it first. The date we shall see is about 755. Hosea begins five or ten years later, and Micah just before 722. The three are in every respect—originality, comprehensiveness, influence upon other prophets—the greatest of our Twelve, and will therefore be treated with most detail, occupying the whole of the first volume.

The rest of the first six are Obadiah, Joel and Jonah.

[1] By a forced interpretation of the phrase in chap. i. 2, *When the Lord spake at the first by Hosea* (R.V.), *Talmud:* Baba Bathra, 14*a*.

But the Book of Obadiah, although it opens with an early oracle against Edom, is in its present form from after the Exile. The Book of Joel is of uncertain date, but, as we shall see, the great probability is that it is late; and the Book of Jonah belongs to a form of literature so different from the others that we may, most conveniently, treat of it last.

This leaves us to follow Micah, at the end of the eighth century, with the group Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk from the second half of the seventh century; and finally to take in their order the post-exilic Haggai, Zechariah i.—ix., Malachi, and the other writings which we feel obliged to place about or even after that date.

One other word is needful. This assignment of the various books to different dates is not to be held as implying that the whole of a book belongs to such a date or to the author whose name it bears. We shall find that hands have been busy with the texts of the books long after the authors of these must have passed away; that besides early fragments incorporated by later writers, prophets of Israel's new dawn mitigated the judgments and lightened the gloom of the watchmen of her night; that here and there are passages which are evidently intrusions, both because they interrupt the argument and because they reflect a much later historical environment than their context. This, of course, will require discussion in each case, and such discussion will be given. The text will be subjected to an independent examination. Some passages hitherto questioned we may find to be unjustly so; others not hitherto questioned we may see reason to suspect. But in any case we shall keep in mind, that the results of an independent inquiry are uncertain; and that in this new criticism of the prophets, which

is comparatively recent, we cannot hope to arrive for some time at so general a consensus, as is being rapidly reached in the far older and more elaborated criticism of the Pentateuch.[1]

Such is the extent and order of the journey which lies before us. If it is not to the very summits of Israel's outlook that we climb—Isaiah, Jeremiah and the great Prophet of the Exile—we are yet to traverse the range of prophecy from beginning to end. We start with its first abrupt elevations in Amos. We are carried by the side of Isaiah and Jeremiah, yet at a lower altitude, on to the Exile. With the returned Israel we pursue an almost immediate rise to vision, and then by Malachi and others are conveyed down dwindling slopes to the very end. Beyond the land is flat. Though Psalms are sung and brave deeds done, and faith is strong and bright, there is no height of outlook; *there is no more any prophet*[2] in Israel.

But our "Twelve" do more than thus carry us from beginning to end of the Prophetic Period. Of second rank as are most of the heights of this mountain range, they yet bring forth and speed on their way not a few of the streams of living water which have nourished later ages, and are flowing to-day. Impetuous cataracts of righteousness—*let it roll on like water, and justice as an everlasting stream*; the irrepressible love of God to sinful men; the perseverance and pursuits of His grace; His mercies that follow the exile and the outcast; His truth that goes forth richly upon the

[1] For further considerations on this point see pp. 142, 194, 202 ff., 223 ff., 308, etc.

[2] Psalm lxxiv. 9.

heathen; the hope of the Saviour of mankind; the outpouring of the Spirit; counsels of patience; impulses of tenderness and of healing; melodies innumerable,—all sprang from these lower hills of prophecy, and sprang so strongly that the world hears and feels them still.

And from the heights of our present pilgrimage there are also clear those great visions of the Stars and the Dawn, of the Sea and the Storm, concerning which it is true, that as long as men live they shall seek out the places whence they can be seen, and thank God for His prophets.

CHAPTER II

THE PROPHET IN EARLY ISRAEL

OUR "Twelve Prophets" will carry us, as we have seen, across the whole extent of the Prophetical period—the period when prophecy became literature, assuming the form and rising to the intensity of an imperishable influence on the world. The earliest of the Twelve, Amos and Hosea, were the inaugurators of this period. They were not only the first (so far as we know) to commit prophecy to writing, but we find in them the germs of all its subsequent development. Yet Amos and Hosea were not unfathered. Behind them lay an older dispensation, and their own was partly a product of this, and partly a revolt against it. Amos says of himself: *The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*—but again: *No prophet I, nor prophet's son!* Who were those earlier prophets, whose office Amos assumed while repudiating their spirit—whose name he abjured, yet could not escape from it? And, while we are about the matter, what do we mean by "prophet" in general?

In vulgar use the name "prophet" has degenerated to the meaning of "one who foretells the future." Of this meaning it is, perhaps, the first duty of every student of prophecy earnestly and stubbornly to rid himself. In its native Greek tongue "prophet" meant

not "one who speaks before," but "one who speaks for, or on behalf of, another." At the Delphic oracle "The Prophētēs" was the title of the official, who received the utterances of the frenzied Pythoness and expounded them to the people;[1] but Plato says that this is a misuse of the word, and that the true prophet is the inspired person himself, he who is in communication with the Deity and who speaks directly for the Deity.[2] So Tiresias, the seer, is called by Pindar the "prophet" or "interpreter of Zeus,"[3] and Plato even styles poets "the prophets of the Muses."[4] It is in this sense that we must think of the "prophet" of the Old Testament. He is a speaker for God. The sharer of God's counsels, as Amos calls him, he becomes the bearer and preacher of God's Word. Prediction of the future is only a part, and

[1] Herodotus, viii. 36, 37.

[2] *Timæus*, 71, 72. The whole passage is worth transcribing:—

"No man, when in his senses, attains prophetic truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word either his intelligence is enthralled by sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession. And he who would understand what he remembers to have been said, whether in dream or when he was awake, by the prophetic and enthusiastic nature, or what he has seen, must recover his senses; and then he will be able to explain rationally what all such words and apparitions mean, and what indications they afford, to this man or that, of past, present, or future, good and evil. But, while he continues demented, he cannot judge of the visions which he sees or the words which he utters; the ancient saying is very true that 'only a man in his senses can act or judge about himself and his own affairs.' And for this reason it is customary to appoint diviners or interpreters as discerners of the oracles of the gods. Some persons call them prophets; they do not know that they are only repeaters of dark sayings and visions, and are not to be called prophets at all, but only interpreters of prophecy."—Jowett's *Translation.*

[3] *Nik.*, i 91.

[4] *Phædrus*, 262 D.

often a subordinate and accidental part, of an office whose full function is to declare the character and the will of God. But the prophet does this in no systematic or abstract form. He brings his revelation point by point, and in connection with some occasion in the history of his people, or some phase of their character. He is not a philosopher nor a theologian with a system of doctrine (at least before Ezekiel), but the messenger and herald of God at some crisis in the life or conduct of His people. His message is never out of touch with events. These form either the subject-matter or the proof or the execution of every oracle he utters. It is, therefore, God not merely as Truth, but far more as Providence, whom the prophet reveals. And although that Providence includes the full destiny of Israel and mankind, the prophet brings the news of it, for the most part, piece by piece, with reference to some present sin or duty, or some impending crisis or calamity. Yet he does all this, not merely because the word needed for the day has been committed to him by itself, and as if he were only its mechanical vehicle; but because he has come under the overwhelming conviction of God's presence and of His character, a conviction often so strong that God's word breaks through him and God speaks in the first person to the people.

1. From the Earliest Times till Samuel.

There was no ancient people but believed in the power of certain personages to consult the Deity and to reveal His will. Every man could sacrifice; but not every man could render in return the oracle of God. This pertained to select individuals or orders.

So the prophet seems to have been an older specialist than the priest, though in every tribe he frequently combined the latter's functions with his own.[1]

The matters on which ancient man consulted God were as wide as life. But naturally at first, in a rude state of society and at a low stage of mental development, it was in regard to the material defence and necessities of life, the bare law and order, that men almost exclusively sought the Divine will. And the whole history of prophecy is just the effort to substitute for these elementary provisions a more personal standard of the moral law, and more spiritual ideals of the Divine Grace.

By the Semitic race—to which we may now confine ourselves, since Israel belonged to it—Deity was worshipped, in the main, as the god of a tribe. Every Semitic tribe had its own god; it would appear that there was no god without a tribe:[2] the traces of belief in a supreme and abstract Deity are few and ineffectual. The tribe was the medium by which the god made himself known, and became an effective power on earth: the god was the patron of the tribe, the supreme magistrate and the leader in war. The piety he demanded was little more than loyalty to ritual; the morality he enforced was only a matter of police. He took no cognisance of the character or inner thoughts of the individual. But the tribe believed him to stand

[1] It is still a controversy whether the original meaning of the Semitic root KHN is prophet, as in the Arabic KāHiN, or priest, as in the Hebrew KôHeN.

[2] Cf. Jer. ii. 10: *For pass over to the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently; and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods?* From the isles of Chittim unto Kedar—the limits of the Semitic world.

in very close connection with all the practical interests of their common life. They asked of him the detection of criminals, the discovery of lost property, the settlement of civil suits, sometimes when the crops should be sown, and always when war should be waged and by what tactics.

The means by which the prophet consulted the Deity on these subjects were for the most part primitive and rude. They may be summed up under two kinds: Visions either through falling into ecstasy or by dreaming in sleep, and Signs or Omens. Both kinds are instanced in Balaam.[1] Of the signs some were natural, like the whisper of trees, the flight of birds, the passage of clouds, the movements of stars. Others were artificial, like the casting or drawing of lots. Others were between these, like the shape assumed by the entrails of the sacrificed animals when thrown on the ground. Again, the prophet was often obliged to do something wonderful in the people's sight, in order to convince them of his authority. In Biblical language he had to work a miracle or give a sign. One instance throws a flood of light on this habitual expectancy of the Semitic mind. There was once an Arab chief, who wished to consult a distant soothsayer as to the guilt of a daughter. But before he would trust the seer to give him the right answer to such a question, he made him discover a grain of corn which he had concealed about his horse.[2] He required the physical sign before he would accept the moral judgment.

Now, to us the crudeness of the means employed,

[1] Numbers xxiv. 4, *falling but having his eyes open.* Ver. 1, *enchantments* ought to be *omens.*

[2] Instanced by Wellhausen, *Skizzen u. Vorarb.*, No. v.

the opportunities of fraud, the inadequacy of the tests for spiritual ends, are very obvious. But do not let us, therefore, miss the numerous moral opportunities which lay before the prophet even at that early stage of his evolution. He was trusted to speak in the name of Deity. Through him men believed in God and in the possibility of a revelation. They sought from him the discrimination of evil from good. The highest possibilities of social ministry lay open to him: the tribal existence often hung on his word for peace or war; he was the mouth of justice, the rebuke of evil, the champion of the wronged. Where such opportunities were present, can we imagine the Spirit of God to have been absent—the Spirit Who seeks men more than they seek Him, and as He condescends to use their poor language for religion must also have stooped to the picture language, to the rude instruments, symbols and sacraments, of their early faith?

In an office of such mingled possibilities everything depended—as we shall find it depend to the very end of prophecy—on the moral insight and character of the prophet himself, on his conception of God and whether he was so true to this as to overcome his professional temptations to fraud and avarice, malice towards individuals, subservience to the powerful, or, worst snares of all, the slothfulness and insincerity of routine. We see this moral issue put very clearly in such a story as that of Balaam, or in such a career as that of Mohammed.

So much for the Semitic soothsayer in general. Now let us turn to Israel.

Among the Hebrews the *man of God*,[1] to use

[1] איש אלהים

his widest designation, is at first called *Seer*,[1] or *Gazer*,[2] the word which Balaam uses of himself. In consulting the Divine will he employs the same external means, he offers the people for their evidence the same signs, as do the seers or soothsayers of other Semitic tribes. He gains influence by the miracles, *the wonderful things*, which he does.[3] Moses himself is represented after this fashion. He meets the magicians of Egypt on their own level. His use of *rods*; the holding up of his hands that Israel may prevail against Amaleq; Joshua's casting of lots to discover a criminal; Samuel's dream in the sanctuary; his discovery for a fee of the lost asses of Saul; David and the images in his house, the ephod he consulted; the sign to go to battle *what time thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees*; Solomon's inducement of dreams by sleeping in the sanctuary at Gibeah,—these are a few of the many proofs, that early prophecy in Israel employed not only the methods but even much of the furniture of the kindred Semitic religions. But then those tools and methods were at the same time accompanied by the noble opportunities of the prophetic office to which I have just alluded--opportunities of religious and social ministry—and, still more, these opportunities were at the disposal of moral influences which, it is a matter of history, were not found in any other Semitic religion than Israel's. However you will explain it, that Divine Spirit, which we have felt unable to conceive as absent from any Semitic prophet who truly sought after God, that Light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world, was present

[1] רֹאֶה [2] חוֹזֶה

[3] Deut. xiii. 1 ff. admits that heathen seers were able to work miracles and give signs, as well as the prophets of Jehovah.

to an unparalleled degree with the early prophets of Israel. He came to individuals, and to the nation as a whole, in events and in influences which may be summed up as the impression of the character of their national God, Jehovah: to use Biblical language, as *Jehovah's spirit* and *power*. It is true that in many ways the Jehovah of early Israel reminds us of other Semitic deities. Like some of them He appears with thunder and lightning; like all of them He is the God of one tribe who are His peculiar people. He bears the same titles—Melek, Adon, Baal (*King*, *Lord*, *Possessor*). He is propitiated by the same offerings. To choose one striking instance, captives and spoil of war are sacrificed to Him with the same relentlessness, and by a process which has even the same names given to it, as in the votive inscriptions of Israel's heathen neighbours.[1] Yet, notwithstanding all these elements, the religion of Jehovah from the very first evinced, by the confession of all critics, an ethical force shared by no other Semitic creed. From the first there was in it the promise and the potency of that sublime monotheism, which in the period of our "Twelve" it afterwards reached.[2] Its earliest effects of course were chiefly political: it welded the twelve tribes into the unity of a nation; it preserved them as one amid the many temptations to scatter along those divergent lines of culture and of faith, which the geography of their country placed so attractively before them.[3] It taught them to prefer religious loyalty to material advantage, and so inspired them with high motives for self-sacrifice and

[1] Cf. Mesha's account of himself and Chemosh on the Moabite Stone, with the narrative of the taking of Ai in the Book of Joshua.

[2] Cf. Kuenen: *Gesammelte Alhandlungen* (trans. by Budde), p. 461.

[3] So in Deborah's Song.

every other duty of patriotism. But it did even better than thus teach them to bear one another's burdens. It inspired them to care for one another's sins. The last chapters of the Book of Judges prove how strong a national conscience there was in early Israel. Even then Israel was a moral, as well as a political, unity. Gradually there grew up, but still unwritten, a body of Torah, or revealed law, which, though its framework was the common custom of the Semitic race, was inspired by ideals of humanity and justice not elsewhere in that race discernible by us.

When we analyse this ethical distinction of early Israel, this indubitable progress which the nation were making while the rest of their world was morally stagnant, we find it to be due to their impressions of the character of their God. This character did not affect them as Righteousness only. At first it was even a more wonderful Grace. Jehovah had chosen them when they were no people, had redeemed them from servitude, had brought them to their land; had borne with their stubbornness, and had forgiven their infidelities. Such a Character was partly manifest in the great events of their history, and partly communicated itself to their finest personalities—as the Spirit of God does communicate with the spirit of man made in His image. Those personalities were the early prophets from Moses to Samuel. They inspired the nation to believe in God's purposes for itself; they rallied it to war for the common faith, and war was then the pitch of self-sacrifice; they gave justice to it in God's name, and rebuked its sinfulness without sparing. Criticism has proved that we do not know nearly so much about those first prophets, as perhaps we thought we did. But under their God they made Israel. Out of their work grew

the monotheism of their successors, whom we are now to study, and later the Christianity of the New Testament. For myself I cannot but believe, that in the influence of Jehovah which Israel owned in those early times, there was the authentic revelation of a real Being.

2. From Samuel to Elisha.

Of the oldest order of Hebrew prophecy, Samuel was the last representative. Till his time, we are told, the prophet in Israel was known as the Seer,[1] but now, with other tempers and other habits, a new order appears, whose name—and that means to a certain extent their spirit—is to displace the older name and the older spirit.

When Samuel anointed Saul he bade him, for a sign that he was chosen of the Lord, go forth to meet *a company of prophets*—Nebi'îm, the singular is Nabi'—coming down from the high place or sanctuary with viols, drums and pipes, and *prophesying*. *There*, he added, *the spirit of Jehovah shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.* So it happened; and the people *said one to another, What is this that is come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?*[2] Another story, probably from another source, tells us that later, when Saul sent troops of messengers to the sanctuary at Ramah to take David, they saw *the company of prophets prophesying and Samuel standing appointed over them*,

[1] 1 Sam. ix. 9.

[2] 1 Sam. x. 1-16, xi. 1-11, 15. Chap. x. 17-27, xi. 12-14, belong to other and later documents. Cf. Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 135 ff.

and the spirit of God fell upon one after another of the troops; as upon Saul himself when he followed them up. *And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?* [1]

All this is very different from the habits of the Seer, who had hitherto represented prophecy. He was solitary, but these went about in bands. They were filled with an infectious enthusiasm, by which they excited each other and all sensitive persons whom they touched. They stirred up this enthusiasm by singing, playing upon instruments, and dancing: its results were frenzy, the tearing of their clothes, and prostration. The same phenomena have appeared in every religion—in Paganism often, and several times within Christianity. They may be watched to-day among the dervishes of Islam, who by singing (as one has seen them in Cairo), by swaying of their bodies, by repeating the Divine Name, and dwelling on the love and ineffable power of God, work themselves into an excitement which ends in prostration and often in insensibility.[2] The whole process is due to an overpowering sense of the Deity—crude and unintelligent if you will, but sincere and authentic—which seems to haunt the early stages of all religions, and to linger to the end with the stagnant and unprogressive. The appearance of this prophecy in Israel has given rise to a controversy as to whether it was purely a

[1] 1 Sam. xix. 20-24.

[2] What seemed most to induce the frenzy of the dervishes whom I watched was the fixing of their attention upon, the yearning of their minds after, the love of God. "Ya habeebi!"—"O my beloved!"—they cried.

native product, or was induced by infection from the Canaanite tribes around. Such questions are of little interest in face of these facts: that the ecstasy sprang up in Israel at a time when the spirit of the people was stirred against the Philistines, and patriotism and religion were equally excited; that it is represented as due to the Spirit of Jehovah; and that the last of the old order of Jehovah's prophets recognised its harmony with his own dispensation, presided over it, and gave Israel's first king as one of his signs, that he should come under its power. These things being so, it is surprising that a recent critic[1] should have seen in the dancing prophets nothing but eccentrics into whose company it was shame for so good a man as Saul to fall. He reaches this conclusion only by supposing that the reflexive verb used for their *prophesying—hithnabbē'*—had at this time that equivalence to mere madness to which it was reduced by the excesses of later generations of prophets. With Samuel we feel that the word had no reproach: the Nebi'îm were recognised by him as standing in the prophetical succession. They sprang up in sympathy with a national movement. The king who joined himself to them was the same who sternly banished from Israel all the baser forms of soothsaying and traffic with the dead. But, indeed, we need no other proof than this: the name Nebi'îm so establishes itself in the popular regard that it displaces the older names of Seer and Gazer, and becomes the classical term for the whole body of prophets from Moses to Malachi.

[1] Cornill, in the first of his lectures on *Der Israelitische Prophetismus*, one of the very best popular studies of prophecy, by a master on the subject. See p. 73 *n*.

There was one very remarkable change effected by this new order of prophets, probably the very greatest relief which prophecy experienced in the course of its evolution. This was separation from the ritual and from the implements of soothsaying. Samuel had been both priest and prophet. But after him the names and the duties were specialised, though the specialising was incomplete. While the new Nebi'îm remained in connection with the ancient centres of religion, they do not appear to have exercised any part of the ritual. The priests, on the other hand, did not confine themselves to sacrifice and other forms of public worship, but exercised many of the so-called prophetic functions. They also, as Hosea tells us, were expected to give Tôrôth—revelations of the Divine will on points of conduct and order. There remained with them the ancient forms of oracle—the Ephod, or plated image, the Teraphim, the lot, and the Urim and Thummim,[1] all of these apparently still regarded as indispensable elements of religion.[2] From such rude forms of ascertaining the Divine Will, prophecy in its new order was absolutely free. And it was free of the ritual of the sanctuaries. As has been justly remarked, the ritual of Israel always remained a peril to the people, the peril of relapsing into Paganism. Not only did it materialise faith and engross affections in the worshipper which were meant for moral objects, but very many of its

[1] It is now past doubt that these were two sacred stones used for decision in the case of an alternative issue. This is plain from the amended reading of Saul's prayer in 1 Sam. xiv. 41, 42 (after the LXX.): *O Jehovah God of Israel, wherefore hast Thou not answered Thy servant this day? If the iniquity be in me or in Jonathan my son, O Jehovah God of Israel, give Urim: and if it be in Thy people Israel, give, I pray Thee, Thummim.*

[2] Hosea iii. 4. See next chapter, p. 38.

forms were actually the same as those of the other Semitic religions, and it tempted its devotees to the confusion of their God with the gods of the heathen. Prophecy was now wholly independent of it, and we may see in such independence the possibility of all the subsequent career of prophecy along moral and spiritual lines. Amos absolutely condemns the ritual, and Hosea brings the message from God, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. This is the distinctive glory of prophecy in that era in which we are to study it. But do not let us forget that it became possible through the ecstatic Nebi'îm of Samuel's time, and through their separation from the national ritual and the material forms of soothsaying. It is the way of Providence to prepare for the revelation of great moral truths, by the enfranchisement, sometimes centuries before, of an order or a nation of men from political or professional interests which would have rendered it impossible for their descendants to appreciate those truths without prejudice or compromise.

We may conceive then of these Nebi'îm, these prophets, as enthusiasts for Jehovah and for Israel. For Jehovah—if to-day we see men cast by the adoration of the despot-deity of Islam into transports so excessive that they lose all consciousness of earthly things and fall into a trance, can we not imagine a like effect produced on the same sensitive natures of the East by the contemplation of such a God as Jehovah, so mighty in earth and heaven, so faithful to His people, so full of grace? Was not such an ecstasy of worship most likely to be born of the individual's ardent devotion in the hour of the nation's despair?[1] Of course there would be swept up by such a movement all the more

[1] Cf. Deut. xxviii. 34.

volatile and unbalanced minds of the day—as these always have been swept up by any powerful religious excitement—but that is not to discredit the sincerity of the main volume of the feeling nor its authenticity as a work of the Spirit of God, as the impression of the character and power of Jehovah.

But these ecstatics were also enthusiasts for Israel; and this saved the movement from morbidness. They worshipped God neither out of sheer physical sympathy with nature, like the Phœnician devotees of Adonis or the Greek Bacchantes; nor out of terror at the approaching end of all things, like some of the ecstatic sects of the Middle Ages; nor out of a selfish passion for their own salvation, like so many a modern Christian fanatic; but in sympathy with their nation's aspirations for freedom and her whole political life. They were enthusiasts for their people. The ecstatic prophet was not confined to his body nor to nature for the impulses of Deity. Israel was his body, his atmosphere, his universe. Through it all he felt the thrill of Deity. Confine religion to the personal, it grows rancid, morbid. Wed it to patriotism, it lives in the open air and its blood is pure. So in days of national danger the Nebi'îm would be inspired like Saul to battle for their country's freedom; in more settled times they would be lifted to the responsibilities of educating the people, counselling the governors, and preserving the national traditions. This is what actually took place. After the critical period of Saul's time has passed, the prophets still remain enthusiasts; but they are enthusiasts for affairs. They counsel and they rebuke David.[1] They warn Rehoboam, and they excite Northern Israel to revolt.[2] They overthrow and they

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 1 ff. [2] 1 Kings xi. 29; xii. 22.

set up dynasties.[1] They offer the king advice on campaigns.[2] Like Elijah, they take up against the throne the cause of the oppressed;[3] like Elisha, they stand by the throne its most trusted counsellors in peace and war.[4] That all this is no new order of prophecy in Israel, but the developed form of the ecstasy of Samuel's day, is plain from the continuance of the name Nebi'îm and from these two facts besides: that the ecstasy survives and that the prophets still live in communities. The greatest figures of the period, Elijah and Elisha, have upon them *the hand of the Lord*, as the influence is now called: Elijah when he runs before Ahab's chariot across Esdraelon, Elisha when by music he induces upon himself the prophetic mood.[5] Another ecstatic figure is the prophet who was sent to anoint Jehu; he swept in and he swept out again, and the soldiers called him *that mad fellow*.[6] But the roving bands had settled down into more or less stationary communities, who partly lived by agriculture and partly by the alms of the people or the endowments of the crown.[7] Their centres were either the centres of national worship, like Bethel and Gilgal, or the centres of government, like Samaria, where the dynasty of Omri supported prophets both of Baal and of Jehovah.[8] They were called prophets, but also *sons of the prophets*, the latter name not because their office was hereditary, but

[1] 1 Kings xiv. 2, 7-11; xix. 15 f.; 2 Kings ix. 3 ff.

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 5 ff.; 2 Kings iii. 11 ff.

[3] 1 Kings xxi. 1 ff.

[4] 2 Kings vi.—viii., etc.

[5] 1 Kings xviii. 46; 2 Kings iii. 15.

[6] 2 Kings ix. 11. *Mad fellow*, not necessarily a term of reproach.

[7] 1 Kings xviii. 4, cf. 19; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5; iv. 38-44; v. 20 ff.; vi. 1 ff.; viii. 8 f., etc.

[8] 1 Kings xviii. 19; xxii. 6.

by the Oriental fashion of designating every member of a guild as the son of the guild. In many cases the son may have succeeded his father; but the ranks could be recruited from outside, as we see in the case of the young farmer Elisha, whom Elijah anointed at the plough. They probably all wore the mantle which is distinctive of some of them, the mantle of hair, or skin of a beast.[1]

The risks of degeneration, to which this order of prophecy was liable, arose both from its ecstatic temper and from its connection with public affairs.

Religious ecstasy is always dangerous to the moral and intellectual interests of religion. The largest prophetic figures of the period, though they feel the ecstasy, attain their greatness by rising superior to it. Elijah's raptures are impressive; but nobler are his defence of Naboth and his denunciation of Ahab. And so Elisha's inducement of the prophetic mood by music is the least attractive element in his career: his greatness lies in his combination of the care of souls with political insight and vigilance for the national interests. Doubtless there were many of the sons of the prophets who with smaller abilities cultivated a religion as rational and moral. But for the herd ecstasy would be everything. It was so easily induced or imitated that much of it cannot have been genuine. Even where the feeling was at first sincere we can understand how readily it became morbid; how fatally it might fall into sympathy with that drunkenness from wine and that sexual passion which Israel saw already cultivated as worship by the surrounding Canaanites. We must feel these dangers of ecstasy if we would

[1] So Elijah, 2 Kings i. 8: cf. John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4.

understand why Amos cut himself off from the Nebi'îm, and why Hosea laid such emphasis on the moral and intellectual sides of religion: *My people perish for lack of knowledge.* Hosea indeed considered the degeneracy of ecstasy as a judgment: *the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad—for the multitude of thine iniquity.*[1] A later age derided the ecstatics, and took one of the forms of the verb *to prophesy* as equivalent to the verb *to be mad.*[2]

But temptations as gross beset the prophet from that which should have been the discipline of his ecstasy—his connection with public affairs. Only some prophets were brave rebukers of the king and the people. The herd which fed at the royal table—four hundred under Ahab—were flatterers, who could not tell the truth, who said Peace, peace, when there was no peace. These were false prophets. Yet it is curious that the very early narrative which describes them[3] does not impute their falsehood to any base motives of their own, but to the direct inspiration of God, who sent forth a lying spirit upon them. So great was the reverence still for the *man of the spirit!* Rather than doubt his inspiration, they held his very lies to be inspired. One does not of course mean that these consenting prophets were conscious liars; but that their dependence on the king, their servile habits of speech, disabled them from seeing the truth. Subserviency to the powerful was their great temptation. In the story of Balaam we see confessed the base instinct that he who paid the pro-

[1] Hosea ix. 7.

[2] Jer. xxix. 26: *Every man that is mad, and worketh himself into prophecy* (מתנבא, the same form as is used without moral reproach in 1 Sam. x. 10 ff.).

[3] 1 Kings xxii.

phet should have the word of the prophet in his favour. In Israel prophecy went through exactly the same struggle between the claims of its God and the claims of its patrons. Nor were those patrons always the rich. The bulk of the prophets were dependent on the charitable gifts of the common people, and in this we may find reason for that subjection of so many of them to the vulgar ideals of the national destiny, to signs of which we are pointed by Amos. The priest at Bethel only reflects public opinion when he takes for granted that the prophet is a thoroughly mercenary character: *Seer, get thee gone to the land of Judah; eat there thy bread, and play the prophet there!*[1] No wonder Amos separates himself from such hireling craftsmen!

Such was the course of prophecy up to Elisha, and the borders of the eighth century. We have seen how even for the ancient prophet, mere soothsayer though we might regard him in respect of the rude instruments of his office, there were present moral opportunities of the highest kind, from which, if he only proved true to them, we cannot conceive the Spirit of God to have been absent. In early Israel we are sure that the Spirit did meet such strong and pure characters, from Moses to Samuel, creating by their means the nation of Israel, welding it to a unity, which was not only political but moral—and moral to a degree not elsewhere realised in the Semitic world. We saw how a new race of prophets arose under Samuel, separate from the older forms of prophecy by lot and oracle, separate, too, from the ritual as a whole; and therefore free for a moral

[1] Amos vii. 12.

and spiritual advance of which the priesthood, still bound to images and the ancient rites, proved themselves incapable. But this new order of prophecy, besides its moral opportunities, had also its moral perils: its ecstasy was dangerous, its connection with public affairs was dangerous too. Again, the test was the personal character of the prophet himself. And so once more we see raised above the herd great personalities, who carry forward the work of their predecessors. The results are, besides the discipline of the monarchy and the defence of justice and the poor, the firm establishment of Jehovah as the one and only God of Israel, and the impression on Israel both of His omnipotent guidance of them in the past, and of a worldwide destiny, still vague but brilliant, which He had prepared for them in the future.

This brings us to Elisha, and from Elisha there are but forty years to Amos. During those forty years, however, there arose within Israel a new civilisation; beyond her there opened up a new world; and with Assyria there entered the resources of Providence, a new power. It was these three facts—the New Civilisation, the New World and the New Power—which made the difference between Elisha and Amos, and raised prophecy from a national to a universal religion.

CHAPTER III

THE EIGHTH CENTURY IN ISRAEL

THE long life of Elisha fell to its rest on the margin of the eighth century.[1] He had seen much evil upon Israel. The people were smitten in all their coasts. None of their territory across Jordan was left to them; and not only Hazael and his Syrians, but bands of their own former subjects, the Moabites, periodically raided Western Palestine, up to the very gates of Samaria.[2] Such a state of affairs determined the activity of the last of the older prophets. Elisha spent his life in the duties of the national defence, and in keeping alive the spirit of Israel against her foes. When he died they called him *Israel's chariot and the horsemen thereof,*[3] so incessant had been both his military vigilance[4] and his political insight.[5] But Elisha was able to leave behind him the promise of a new day of victory.[6] It was in the peace and liberty of this day that Israel rose a step in civilisation; that prophecy, released from the defence, became the criticism, of the national life; and that the people, no longer absorbed in their own borders, looked out, and

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[1] He died in 798 or 797.
[2] 2 Kings x. 32, xiii. 20, 22.
[3] 2 Kings xiii. 14.
[4] vi. 12 ff., etc.
[5] viii., etc.
[6] xiii. 17 ff.

for the first time realised the great world, of which they were only a part.

King Joash, whose arms the dying Elisha had blessed, won back in the sixteen years of his reign (798—783) the cities which the Syrians had taken from his father.[1] His successor, Jeroboam II., came in, therefore, with a flowing tide. He was a strong man, and he took advantage of it. During his long reign of about forty years (783—743) he restored the border of Israel from the Pass of Hamath between the Lebanons to the Dead Sea, and occupied at least part of the territory of Damascus.[2] This means that the constant raids to which Israel had been subjected now ceased, and that by the time of Amos, about 755, a generation was grown up who had not known defeat, and the most of whom had perhaps no experience even of war.

Along the same length of years Uzziah (*circa* 778—740) had dealt similarly with Judah.[3] He had pushed south to the Red Sea, while Jeroboam pushed north to Hamath; and while Jeroboam had taken the Syrian towns he had crushed the Philistine. He had reorganised the army, and invented new engines of siege for casting stones. On such of his frontiers as were opposed to the desert he had built towers: there is no better means of keeping the nomads in subjection.

All this meant such security across broad Israel as had not been known since the glorious days of Solomon. Agriculture must everywhere have revived: Uzziah, the Chronicler tells us, *loved husbandry*. But we hear most of Trade and Building. With quarters in Damascus and a port on the Red Sea, with allies

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 23-25. [2] xiv. 28, if not Damascus itself.
[3] 2 Kings xv.: cf. 2 Chron. xxvi.

in the Phœnician towns and tributaries in the Philistine, with command of all the main routes between Egypt and the North as between the Desert and the Levant, Israel, during those forty years of Jeroboam and Uzziah, must have become a busy and a wealthy commercial power. Hosea calls the Northern Kingdom a very Canaan[1]—Canaanite being the Hebrew term for trader—as we should say a very Jew; and Amos exposes all the restlessness, the greed, and the indifference to the poor of a community making haste to be rich. The first effect of this was a large increase of the towns and of town-life. Every document of the time—up to 720—speaks to us of its buildings.[2] In ordinary building houses of ashlar seem to be novel enough to be mentioned. Vast *palaces*—the name of them first heard of in Israel under Omri and his Phœnician alliance, and then only as that of the king's citadel[3]—are now built by wealthy grandees out of money extorted from the poor; they can have risen only since the Syrian wars. There are summer houses in addition to winter houses; and it is not only the king, as in the days of Ahab, who furnishes his buildings with ivory. When an earthquake comes and whole cities are overthrown, the vigour and wealth of the people are such that they build more strongly and lavishly than before.[4] With all this we have the characteristic tempers and moods

[1] xii. 7 (Heb. ver. 8). Trans., *As for Canaan, the balances, etc.*

[2] Amos, *passim*. Hosea viii. 14, etc.; Micah iii. 12; Isa. ix. 10.

[3] ארמון, a word not found in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, or Samuel, is used in 1 Kings xvi. 18, 2 Kings xv. 25, for a citadel within the palace of the king. Similarly in Isa. xxv. 2; Pro. xviii 19. But in Amos generally of any large or grand house. That the name first appears in the time of Omri's alliance with Tyre, points to a Phœnician origin. Probably from root ארם, *to be high.*

[4] Isa. ix. 10.

of city-life: the fickleness and liability to panic which are possible only where men are gathered in crowds; the luxury and false art which are engendered only by artificial conditions of life; the deep poverty which in all cities, from the beginning to the end of time, lurks by the side of the most brilliant wealth, its dark and inevitable shadow.

In short, in the half-century between Elisha and Amos, Israel rose from one to another of the great stages of culture. Till the eighth century they had been but a kingdom of fighting husbandmen. Under Jeroboam and Uzziah city-life was developed, and civilisation, in the proper sense of the word, appeared. Only once before had Israel taken so large a step: when they crossed Jordan, leaving the nomadic life for the agricultural; and that had been momentous for their religion. They came among new temptations: the use of wine, and the shrines of local gods who were believed to have more influence on the fertility of the land than Jehovah who had conquered it for His people. But now this further step, from the agricultural stage to the mercantile and civil, was equally fraught with danger. There was the closer intercourse with foreign nations and their cults. There were all the temptations of rapid wealth, all the dangers of an equally increasing poverty. The growth of comfort among the rulers meant the growth of thoughtlessness. Cruelty multiplied with refinement. The upper classes were lifted away from feeling the real woes of the people. There was a well-fed and sanguine patriotism, but at the expense of indifference to social sin and want. Religious zeal and liberality increased, but they were coupled with all the proud's misunderstanding of God: an optimist faith without moral insight or sympathy.

It is all this which makes the prophets of the eighth century so modern, while Elisha's life is still so ancient. With him we are back in the times of our own border wars—of Wallace and Bruce, with their struggles for the freedom of the soil. With Amos we stand among the conditions of our own day. The City has arisen. For the development of the highest form of prophecy, the universal and permanent form, there was needed that marvellously unchanging mould of human life, whose needs and sorrows, whose sins and problems, are to-day the same as they were all those thousands of years ago.

With Civilisation came Literature. The long peace gave leisure for writing; and the just pride of the people in boundaries broad as Solomon's own, determined that this writing should take the form of heroic history. In the parallel reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah many critics have placed the great epics of Israel: the earlier documents of our Pentateuch which trace God's purposes to mankind by Israel, from the creation of the world to the settlement of the Promised Land; the histories which make up our Books of Judges, Samuel and Kings. But whether all these were composed now or at an earlier date, it is certain that the nation lived in the spirit of them, proud of its past, aware of its vocation, and confident that its God, who had created the world and so mightily led itself, would bring it from victory by victory to a complete triumph over the heathen. Israel of the eighth century were devoted to Jehovah; and although passion or self-interest might lead individuals or even communities to worship other gods, He had no possible rival upon the throne of the nation.

As they delighted to recount His deeds by their

fathers, so they thronged the scenes of these with sacrifice and festival. Bethel and Beersheba, Dan and Gilgal, were the principal;[1] but Mizpeh, the top of Tabor,[2] and Carmel,[3] perhaps Penuel,[4] were also conspicuous among the countless *high places*[5] of the land. Of those in Northern Israel Bethel was the chief. It enjoyed the proper site for an ancient shrine, which was nearly always a market as well—near a frontier and where many roads converged; where traders from the East could meet half-way with traders from the West, the wool-growers of Moab and the Judæan desert with the merchants of Phœnicia and the Philistine coast. Here, on the spot on which the father of the nation had seen heaven open,[6] a great temple was now built, with a priesthood endowed and directed by the crown,[7] but lavishly supported also by the tithes and free-will offerings of the people.[8] *It is a sanctuary of the king and a house of the kingdom.*[9] Jeroboam had ordained Dan, at the other end of the kingdom, to be the fellow of Bethel;[10] but Dan was far away from the bulk of the people, and in the eighth century Bethel's real rival

[1] 1 Kings xii. 25 ff., and Amos and Hosea *passim.*

[2] Hosea v. 1.

[3] 1 Kings xviii. 30 ff.

[4] 1 Kings xii. 25.

[5] Originally so called from their elevation (though oftener on the flank than on the summit of a hill); but like the name High Street or the Scottish High Kirk, the term came to be dissociated from physical height and was applied to any sanctuary, even in a hollow, like so many of the sacred wells.

[6] The sanctuary itself was probably on the present site of the Burj Beitin (with the ruins of an early Christian Church), some few minutes to the south-east of the present village of Beitin, which probably represents the city of Bethel that was called Luz at the first.

[7] 1 Kings xii. 25 ff.; Amos vii.

[8] Amos iv. 4. [9] Amos vii. 13. [10] 1 Kings xii. 25 ff.

was Gilgal.[1] Whether this was the Gilgal by Jericho, or the other Gilgal on the Samarian hills near Shiloh, is uncertain. The latter had been a sanctuary in Elijah's day, with a settlement of the prophets; but the former must have proved the greater attraction to a people so devoted to the sacred events of their past. Was it not the first resting-place of the Ark after the passage of Jordan, the scene of the re-institution of circumcision, of the anointing of the first king, of Judah's second submission to David?[2] As there were many Gilgals in the land—literally *cromlechs*, ancient *stone-circles* sacred to the Canaanites as well as to Israel—so there were many Mizpehs, *Watch-towers*, *Seers' stations*: the one mentioned by Hosea was probably in Gilead.[3] To the southern Beersheba, to which Elijah had fled from Jezebel, pilgrimages were made by northern Israelites traversing Judah. The sanctuary on Carmel was the ancient altar of Jehovah which Elijah had rebuilt; but Carmel seems at this time to have lain, as it did so often, in the power of the Phœnicians, for it is imagined by the prophets only as a hiding-place from the face of Jehovah.[4]

At all these sanctuaries it was Jehovah and no other

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[1] Curiously enough conceived by many of the early Christian Fathers as containing the second of the calves. Cyril, *Comm. in Hoseam*, 5; Epiph., *De Vitis Proph.*, 237; *Chron. Pasc.*, 161.

[2] Josh. iv. 20 ff., v. 2 ff.; 1 Sam. xi. 14, 15, etc.; 2 Sam. xix. 15, 40. This Gilgal by Jericho fell to N. Israel after the Disruption; but there is nothing in Amos or Hosea to tell us, whether it or the Gilgal near Shiloh, which seems to have absorbed the sanctity of the latter, is the shrine which they couple with Bethel—except that they never talk of "going up" to it. The passage from Epiphanius in previous note speaks of the Gilgal with the calf as the "Gilgal which is in Shiloh."

[3] Site uncertain. See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 579, 586.

[4] Amos ix. 3. But cf. i. 2.

who was sought: *thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*[1] At Bethel and at Dan He was adored in the form of a calf; probably at Gilgal also, for there is a strong tradition to that effect;[2] and elsewhere men still consulted the other images which had been used by Saul and by David, the Ephod and the Teraphim.[3] With these there was the old Semitic symbol of the Maççebah, or upright stone on which oil was poured.[4] All of them had been used in the worship of Jehovah by the great examples and leaders of the past; all of them had been spared by Elijah and Elisha: it was no wonder that the common people of the eighth century felt them to be indispensable elements of religion, the removal of which, like the removal of the monarchy or of sacrifice itself, would mean utter divorce from the nation's God.[5]

One great exception must be made. Compared with the sanctuaries we have mentioned, Zion itself was very modern. But it contained the main repository of Israel's religion, the Ark, and in connection with the Ark the worship of Jehovah was not a worship of

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[1] 2 Kings xii. 28.

[2] See above, p. 37, *n.* 1.

[3] The Ephod, *the plated thing*; presumably a wooden image covered either with a skin of metal or a cloak of metal. The Teraphim were images in human shape.

[4] The *menhir* of modern Palestine—not a hewn pillar, but oblong natural stone narrowing a little towards the top (cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 183-188). From Hosea x. 1, 2, it would appear that the maççeboth of the eighth century were artificial. *They make good* maççeboth (A.V. wrongly *images*).

[5] So indeed Hosea iii. 4 implies. The Asherah, the pole or symbolic tree of Canaanite worship, does not appear to have been used as a part of the ritual of Jehovah's worship. But, that there was constantly a temptation so to use it, is clear from Deut. xvi. 21, 22. See Driver on that passage.

images. It is significant that from this, the original sanctuary of Israel, with the pure worship, the new prophecy derived its first inspiration. But to that we shall return later with Amos.[1] Apart from the Ark, Jerusalem was not free from images, nor even from the altars of foreign deities.

Where the externals of the ritual were thus so much the same as those of the Canaanite cults, which were still practised in and around the land, it is not surprising that the worship of Jehovah should be further invaded by many pagan practices, nor that Jehovah Himself should be regarded with imaginations steeped in pagan ideas of the Godhead. That even the foulest tempers of the Canaanite ritual, those inspired by wine and the sexual passion, were licensed in the sanctuaries of Israel, both Amos and Hosea testify. But the worst of the evil was wrought in the popular conception of God. Let us remember again that Jehovah had no real rival at this time in the devotion of His people, and that their faith was expressed both by the legal forms of His religion and by a liberality which exceeded these. The tithes were paid to Him, and paid, it would appear, with more than legal frequency.[2] Sabbath and New Moon, as days of worship and rest from business, were observed with a Pharisaic scrupulousness for the letter if not for the spirit.[3] The prescribed festivals were held, and thronged by zealous devotees who rivalled each other in the amount of their free-will offerings.[4] Pilgrimages were made to Bethel, to Gilgal, to far Beersheba, and the very way to the latter appeared as sacred to the Israelite as the way

[1] See below, p. 99.
[2] Amos iv. 4 ff.
[3] Amos vii. 4: cf. 2 Kings v. 23.
[4] Amos iv. 4 f.

to Mecca does to a pious Moslem of to-day.[1] Yet, in spite of all this devotion to their God, Israel had no true ideas of Him. To quote Amos, they sought His sanctuaries, but Him they did not seek; in the words of Hosea's frequent plaint, they *did not know Him.* To the mass of the people, to their governors, their priests, and the most of their prophets, Jehovah was but the characteristic Semitic deity—patron of His people, and caring for them alone—who had helped them in the past, and was bound to help them still—very jealous as to the correctness of His ritual and the amount of His sacrifices, but indifferent about real morality. Nay, there were still darker streaks in their views of Him. A god, figured as an ox, could not be adored by a cattle-breeding people without starting in their minds thoughts too much akin to the foul tempers of the Canaanite faiths. These things it is almost a shame to mention; but without knowing that they fermented in the life of that generation, we shall not appreciate the vehemence of Amos or of Hosea.

Such a religion had no discipline for the busy, mercenary life of the day. Injustice and fraud were rife in the very precincts of the sanctuary. Magistrates and priests alike were smitten with their generation's love of money, and did everything for reward. Again and again do the prophets speak of bribery. Judges took gifts and perverted the cause of the poor; priests drank the mulcted wine, and slept on the pledged garments of religious offenders. There was no disinterested service of God or of the commonweal. Mammon was supreme. The influence of the commercial character of the age appears in another very remarkable result.

[1] See below, p. 185.

An agricultural community is always sensitive to the religion of nature. They are awed by its chastisements —droughts, famines and earthquakes. They feel its majestic order in the course of the seasons, the procession of day and night, the march of the great stars, all the host of the Lord of hosts. But Amos seems to have had to break into passionate reminders of Him that maketh Orion and the Pleiades, and turneth the murk into morning.[1] Several physical calamities visited the land. The locusts are bad in Palestine every sixth or seventh year: one year before Amos began they had been very bad. There was a monstrous drought, followed by a famine. There was a long-remembered earthquake—*the earthquake in the days of Uzziah.* With Egypt so near, the home of the plague, and with so much war afoot in Northern Syria, there were probably more pestilences in Western Asia than those recorded in 803, 765 and 759. There was a total eclipse of the sun in 763. But of all these, except perhaps the pestilence, a commercial people are independent as an agricultural are not. Israel speedily recovered from them, without any moral improvement. Even when the earthquake came *they said in pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycomores are cut down, but we will change to cedars.*[2] It was a marvellous generation—so joyous, so energetic, so patriotic, so devout! But its strength was the strength of cruel wealth, its peace the peace of an immoral religion.

I have said that the age is very modern, and we shall indeed go to its prophets feeling that they speak to conditions of life extremely like our own. But if

[1] But whether these be by Amos see Chap. XI. [2] Isa ix. 10.

we wish a still closer analogy from our history, we must travel back to the fourteenth century in England —Langland's and Wyclif's century, which, like this one in Israel, saw both the first real attempts towards a national literature, and the first real attempts towards a moral and religious reform. Then as in Israel a long and victorious reign was drawing to a close, under the threat of disaster when it should have passed. Then as in Israel there had been droughts, earthquakes and pestilences with no moral results upon the nation. Then also there was a city life developing at the expense of country life. Then also the wealthy began to draw aloof from the people. Then also there was a national religion, zealously cultivated and endowed by the liberality of the people, but superstitious, mercenary, and corrupted by sexual disorder. Then too there were many pilgrimages to popular shrines, and the land was strewn with mendicant priests and hireling preachers. And then too prophecy raised its voice, for the first time fearless in England. As we study the verses of Amos we shall find again and again the most exact parallels to them in the verses of Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, which denounce the same vices in Church and State, and enforce the same principles of religion and morality.

It was when the reign of Jeroboam was at its height of assured victory, when the nation's prosperity seemed impregnable after the survival of those physical calamities, when the worship and the commerce were in full course throughout the land, that the first of the new prophets broke out against Israel in the name of Jehovah, threatening judgment alike upon the new civilisation

of which they were so proud and the old religion in which they were so confident. These prophets were inspired by feelings of the purest morality, by the passionate conviction that God could no longer bear such impurity and disorder. But, as we have seen, no prophet in Israel ever worked on the basis of principles only. He came always in alliance with events. These first appeared in the shape of the great physical disasters. But a more powerful instrument of Providence, in the service of judgment, was appearing on the horizon. This was the Assyrian Empire. So vast was its influence on prophecy that we must devote to it a separate chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF ASSYRIA UPON PROPHECY

BY far the greatest event in the eighth century before Christ was the appearance of Assyria in Palestine. To Israel since the Exodus and Conquest, nothing had happened capable of so enormous an influence at once upon their national fortunes and their religious development. But while the Exodus and Conquest had advanced the political and spiritual progress of Israel in equal proportion, the effect of the Assyrian invasion was to divorce these two interests, and destroy the state while it refined and confirmed the religion. After permitting the Northern Kingdom to reach an extent and splendour unrivalled since the days of Solomon, Assyria overthrew it in 721, and left all Israel scarcely a third of their former magnitude. But while Assyria proved so disastrous to the state, her influence upon the prophecy of the period was little short of creative. Humanly speaking, this highest stage of Israel's religion could not have been achieved by the prophets except in alliance with the armies of that heathen empire. Before then we turn to their pages it may be well for us to make clear in what directions Assyria performed this spiritual service for Israel. While pursuing this inquiry we may be able to find answers to the scarcely less important

questions: why the prophets were at first doubtful of the part Assyria was destined to play in the providence of the Almighty? and why, when the prophets were at last convinced of the certainty of Israel's overthrow, the statesmen of Israel and the bulk of the people still remained so unconcerned about her coming, or so sanguine of their power to resist her? This requires, to begin with, a summary of the details of the Assyrian advance upon Palestine.

In the far past Palestine had often been the hunting-ground of the Assyrian kings. But after 1100 B.C., and for nearly two centuries and a half, her states were left to themselves. Then Assyria resumed the task of breaking down that disbelief in her power with which her long withdrawal seems to have inspired their politics. In 870 Assurnasirpal reached the Levant, and took tribute from Tyre and Sidon. Omri was reigning in Samaria, and must have come into close relations with the Assyrians, for during more than a century and a half after his death they still called the land of Israel by his name.[1] In 854 Salmanassar II. defeated at Karkar the combined forces of Ahab and Benhadad. In 850, 849 and 846 he conducted campaigns against Damascus. In 842 he received tribute from Jehu,[2] and in 839 again fought Damascus under Hazael. After this there passed a whole generation during which Assyria came no farther south than Arpad, some sixty miles north of Damascus; and Hazael employed the respite in those campaigns which proved so disastrous for Israel, by robbing her of the provinces across Jordan, and ravaging the

[1] "The house of Omri": so even in Sargon's time, 722—705.

[2] The Black Obelisk of Salmanassar in the British Museum, on which the messengers of Jehu are portrayed.

country about Samaria.[1] In 803 Assyria returned, and accomplished the siege and capture of Damascus. The first consequence to Israel was that restoration of her hopes under Joash, at which the aged Elisha was still spared to assist,[2] and which reached its fulfilment in the recovery of all Eastern Palestine by Jeroboam II.[3] Jeroboam's own relations to Assyria have not been recorded either by the Bible or by the Assyrian monuments. It is hard to think that he paid no tribute to the "king of kings." At all events it is certain that, while Assyria again overthrew the Arameans of Damascus in 773 and their neighbours of Hadrach in 772 and 765, Jeroboam was himself invading Aramean land, and the Book of Kings even attributes to him an extension of territory, or at least of political influence, up to the northern mouth of the great pass between the Lebanons.[4] For the next twenty years Assyria only once came as far as Lebanon—to Hadrach in 759—and it may have been this long quiescence which enabled the rulers and people of Israel to forget, if indeed their religion and sanguine patriotism had ever allowed them to realise, how much the conquests and splendour of Jeroboam's reign were due, not to themselves, but to the heathen power which had maimed their oppressors. Their dreams were brief. Before Jeroboam himself was dead, a new king had usurped the Assyrian throne (745 B.C.) and inaugurated a more vigorous policy. Borrowing the name of the

[1] 2 Kings x. 32 f.; xiii. 3.

[2] 2 Kings xiii. 14 ff.

[3] The phrase in 2 Kings xiii. 5, *Jehovah gave Israel a saviour*, is interpreted by certain scholars as if the saviour were Assyria. In xiv. 27 he is plainly said to be Jeroboam.

[4] The entering in of Hamath (2 Kings xiv. 25).

ancient Tiglath-Pileser, he followed that conqueror's path across the Euphrates. At first it seemed as if he was to suffer check. His forces were engrossed by the siege of Arpad for three years (*c.* 743), and this delay, along with that of two years more, during which he had to return to the conquest of Babylon, may well have given cause to the courts of Damascus and Samaria to believe that the Assyrian power had not really revived. Combining, they attacked Judah under Ahaz. But Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser, who within a year (734—733) had overthrown Damascus and carried captive the populations of Gilead and Galilee. There could now be no doubt as to what the Assyrian power meant for the political fortunes of Israel. Before this resistless and inexorable empire, the people of Jehovah were as the most frail of their neighbours—sure of defeat, and sure, too, of that terrible captivity in exile which formed the novel policy of the invaders against the tribes who withstood them. Israel dared to withstand. The vassal Hoshea, whom the Assyrians had placed on the throne of Samaria in 730, kept back his tribute. The people rallied to him ; and for more than three years this little tribe of highlanders resisted in their capital the Assyrian siege. Then came the end. Samaria fell in 721, and Israel went into captivity beyond the Euphrates.

In following the course of this long tragedy, a man's heart cannot but feel that *all* the splendour and the glory did not lie with the prophets, in spite of their being the only actors in the drama who perceived its moral issues and predicted its actual end. For who can withhold admiration from those few tribesmen, who accepted no defeat as final, but so long as they were left to their fatherland rallied their ranks to its

liberty and defied the huge empire. Nor was their courage always as blind, as in the time of Isaiah Samaria's so fatally became. For one cannot have failed to notice, how fitful and irregular was Assyria's advance, at least up to the reign of Tiglath-Pileser; nor how prolonged and doubtful were her sieges of some of the towns. The Assyrians themselves do not always record spoil or tribute after what they are pleased to call their victories over the cities of Palestine. To the same campaign they had often to return for several years in succession.[1] It took Tiglath-Pileser himself three years to reduce Arpad; Salmanassar IV. besieged Samaria for three years, and was slain before it yielded. These facts enable us to understand that, apart from the moral reasons which the prophets urged for the certainty of Israel's overthrow by Assyria, it was always within the range of political possibility that Assyria would not come back, and that while she was engaged with revolts of other portions of her huge and disorganised empire, a combined revolution on the part of her Syrian vassals would be successful. The prophets themselves felt the influence of these chances. They were not always confident, as we shall see, that Assyria was to be the means of Israel's overthrow. Amos, and in his earlier years Isaiah, describe her with a caution and a vagueness for which there is no other explanation than the political uncertainty that again and again hung over the future of her advance upon Syria. It, then, even in those high minds, to whom the moral issue was so clear, the political form that issue should assume was yet temporarily uncertain,

[1] Salmanassar II. in 850, 849, 846 to war against Dad'idri of Damascus, and in 842 and 839 against Hazael, his successor.

what good reasons must the mere statesmen of Syria have often felt for the proud security which filled the intervals between the Assyrian invasions, or the sanguine hopes which inspired their resistance to the latter.

We must not cast over the whole Assyrian advance the triumphant air of the annals of such kings as Tiglath-Pileser or Sennacherib. Campaigning in Palestine was a dangerous business even to the Romans; and for the Assyrian armies there was always possible besides some sudden recall by the rumour of a revolt in a distant province. Their own annals supply us with good reasons for the sanguine resistance offered to them by the tribes of Palestine. No defeat, of course, is recorded; but the annals are full of delays and withdrawals. Then the Plague would break out; we know how in the last year of the century it turned Sennacherib, and saved Jerusalem.[1] In short, up almost to the end the Syrian chiefs had some fair political reasons for resistance to a power which had so often defeated them; while at the very end, when no such reason remained and our political sympathy is exhausted, we feel it replaced by an even warmer admiration for their desperate defence. Mere mountain-cats of tribes as some of them were, they held their poorly furnished rocks against one, two or three years of cruel siege.

In Israel these political reasons for courage against Assyria were enforced by the whole instincts of the popular religion. The century had felt a new outburst of enthusiasm for Jehovah.[2] This was con-

[1] See in this series *Isaiah*, Vol. I., pp. 359 ff.

[2] See above, pp. 35 ff.

sequent, not only upon the victories He had granted over Aram, but upon the literature of the peace which followed those victories: the collection of the stories of the ancient miracles of Jehovah in the beginning of His people's history, and of the purpose He had even then announced of bringing Israel to supreme rank in the world. Such a God, so anciently manifested, so recently proved, could never surrender His own nation to a mere Goî[1]—a heathen and a barbarian people. Add this dogma of the popular religion of Israel to those substantial hopes of Assyria's withdrawal from Palestine, and you see cause, intelligible and adequate, for the complacency of Jeroboam and his people to the fact that Assyria had at last, by the fall of Damascus, reached their own borders, as well as for the courage with which Hoshea in 725 threw off the Assyrian yoke, and, with a willing people, for three years defended Samaria against the great king. Let us not think that the opponents of the prophets were utter fools or mere puppets of fate. They had reasons for their optimism; they fought for their hearths and altars with a valour and a patience which proves that the nation as a whole was not so corrupt, as we are sometimes, by the language of the prophets, tempted to suppose.

But all this—the reasonableness of the hope of resisting Assyria, the valour which so stubbornly fought her, the religious faith which sanctioned both valour and hope—only the more vividly illustrates the singular independence of the prophets, who took an opposite view, who so consistently affirmed that Israel

[1] To use the term which Amos adopts with such ironical force: vi. 14.

must fall, and so early foretold that she should fall to Assyria.

The reason of this conviction of the prophets was, of course, their fundamental faith in the righteousness of Jehovah. That was a belief quite independent of the course of events. As a matter of history, the ethical reasons for Israel's doom were manifest to the prophets within Israel's own life, before the signs grew clear on the horizon that the doomster was to be Assyria.[1] Nay, we may go further, and say that it could not possibly have been otherwise. For except the prophets had been previously furnished with the ethical reasons for Assyria's resistless advance on Israel, to their sensitive minds that advance must have been a hopeless and a paralysing problem. But they nowhere treat it as a problem. By them Assyria is always either welcomed as a proof or summoned as a means—the proof of their conviction that Israel requires humbling, the means of carrying that humbling into effect. The faith of the prophets is ready for Assyria from the moment that she becomes ominous for Israel, and every footfall of her armies on Jehovah's soil becomes the corroboration of the purpose He has already declared to His servants in the terms of their moral consciousness. The spiritual service which Assyria rendered to Israel was therefore secondary to the prophets' native convictions of the righteousness of God, and could not have been performed without

[1] When we get down among the details we shall see clear evidence for this fact, for instance, that Amos prophesied against Israel at a time when he thought that the Lord's anger was to be exhausted in purely natural chastisements of His people, and before it was revealed to him that Assyria was required to follow up these chastisements with a heavier blow. See Chap. VI., Section 2.

these. This will become even more clear if we look for a little at the exact nature of that service.

In its broadest effects, the Assyrian invasion meant for Israel a very considerable change in the intellectual outlook. Hitherto Israel's world had virtually lain between the borders promised of old to their ambition —*the river of Egypt*,[1] *and the great river, the River Euphrates.* These had marked not merely the sphere of Israel's politics, but the horizon within which Israel had been accustomed to observe the action of their God and to prove His character, to feel the problems of their religion rise and to grapple with them. But now there burst from the outside of this little world that awful power, sovereign and inexorable, which effaced all distinctions and treated Israel in the same manner as her heathen neighbours. This was more than a widening of the world: it was a change of the very poles. At first sight it appeared merely to have increased the scale on which history was conducted; it was really an alteration of the whole character of history. Religion itself shrivelled up, before a force so much vaster than anything it had yet encountered, and so contemptuous of its claims. *What is Jehovah*, said the Assyrian in his laughter, *more than the gods of Damascus, or of Hamath, or of the Philistines?* In fact, for the mind of Israel, the crisis, though less in degree, was in quality not unlike that produced in the religion of Europe by the revelation of the Copernican astronomy. As the earth, previously believed to be the centre of the universe, the stage on which the Son of God had achieved God's eternal purposes to mankind, was

[1] That is, of course, not the Nile, but the great Wady, at present known as the Wady el 'Arish, which divides Palestine from Egypt.

discovered to be but a satellite of one of innumerable suns, a mere ball swung beside millions of others by a force which betrayed no sign of sympathy with the great transactions which took place on it, and so faith in the Divine worth of these was rudely shaken—so Israel, who had believed themselves to be the peculiar people of the Creator, the solitary agents of the God of Righteousness to all mankind,[1] and who now felt themselves brought to an equality with other tribes by this sheer force, which, brutally indifferent to spiritual distinctions, swayed the fortunes of all alike, must have been tempted to unbelief in the spiritual facts of their history, in the power of their God and the destiny He had promised them. Nothing could have saved Israel, as nothing could have saved Europe, but a conception of God which rose to this new demand upon its powers—a faith which said, "Our God is sufficient for this greater world and its forces that so dwarf our own ; the discovery of these only excites in us a more awful wonder of His power." The prophets had such a conception of God. To them He was absolute righteousness—righteousness wide as the widest world, stronger than the strongest force. To the prophets, therefore, the rise of Assyria only increased the possibilities of Providence. But it could not have done this had Providence not already been invested in a God capable by His character of rising to such possibilities.

Assyria, however, was not only Force : she was also the symbol of a great Idea—the Idea of Unity. We have just ventured on one historical analogy. We may try another and a more exact one. The Empire

[1] So already in the JE narratives of the Pentateuch.

of Rome, grasping the whole world in its power and reducing all races of men to much the same level of political rights, powerfully assisted Christian theology in the task of imposing upon the human mind a clearer imagination of unity in the government of the world and of spiritual equality among men of all nations. A not dissimilar service to the faith of Israel was performed by the Empire of Assyria. History, that hitherto had been but a series of angry pools, became as the ocean swaying in tides to one almighty impulse. It was far easier to imagine a sovereign Providence when Assyria reduced history to a unity by overthrowing all the rulers and all their gods, than when history was broken up into the independent fortunes of many states, each with its own religion divinely valid in its own territory. By shattering the tribes Assyria shattered the tribal theory of religion, which we have seen to be the characteristic Semitic theory—a god for every tribe, a tribe for every god. The field was cleared of the many: there was room for the One. That He appeared, not as the God of the conquering race, but as the Deity of one of their many victims, was due to Jehovah's righteousness. At this juncture, when the world was suggested to have one throne and that throne was empty, there was a great chance, if we may so put it, for a god with a character. And the only God in all the Semitic world who had a character was Jehovah.

It is true that the Assyrian Empire was not constructive, like the Roman, and, therefore, could not assist the prophets to the idea of a Catholic Church. But there can be no doubt that it did assist them to a feeling of the moral unity of mankind. A great historian has made the just remark that, whatsoever

widens the imagination, enabling it to realise the actual experience of other men, is a powerful agent of ethical advance.[1] Now Assyria widened the imagination and the sympathy of Israel in precisely this way. Consider the universal Pity of the Assyrian conquest: how state after state went down before it, how all things mortal yielded and were swept away. The mutual hatreds and ferocities of men could not persist before a common Fate, so sublime, so tragic. And thus we understand how in Israel the old envies and rancours of that border warfare with her foes which had filled the last four centuries of her history is replaced by a new tenderness and compassion towards the national efforts, the achievements and all the busy life of the Gentile peoples. Isaiah is especially distinguished by this in his treatment of Egypt and of Tyre; and even where he and others do not, as in these cases, appreciate the sadness of the destruction of so much brave beauty and serviceable wealth, their tone in speaking of the fall of the Assyrian on their neighbours is one of compassion and not of exultation.[2] As the rivalries and hatreds of individual lives are stilled in the presence of a common death, so even that factious, ferocious world of the Semites ceased to *fret its anger and watch it for ever* (to quote Amos' phrase) in face of the universal Assyrian Fate. But in that Fate there was more than Pity. On the data of the prophets Assyria was afflicting Israel for moral reasons: it could not be for other reasons that she was afflicting their neighbours. Israel and the heathen were suffering for

[1] Lecky: *History of European Morals*, I.

[2] The present writer has already pointed out this with regard to Egypt and Phœnicia in *Isaiah* (Expositor's Bible Series), I., Chaps. XXII. and XXIII., and with regard to Philistia in *Hist. Geog.*, p. 178.

the same righteousness' sake. What could have better illustrated the moral equality of all mankind! No doubt the prophets were already theoretically convinced[1] of this—for the righteousness they believed in was nothing if not universal. But it is one thing to hold a belief on principle and another to have practical experience of it in history. To a theory of the moral equality of mankind Assyria enabled the prophets to add sympathy and conscience. We shall see all this illustrated in the opening prophecies of Amos against the foreign nations.

But Assyria did not help to develop monotheism in Israel only by contributing to the doctrines of a moral Providence and of the equality of all men beneath it. The influence must have extended to Israel's conception of God in Nature. Here, of course, Israel was already possessed of great beliefs. Jehovah had created man; He had divided the Red Sea and Jordan. The desert, the storm, and the seasons were all subject to Him. But at a time when the superstitious mind of the people was still feeling after other Divine powers in the earth, the waters and the air of Canaan, it was a very valuable antidote to such dissipation of their faith to find one God swaying, through Assyria, all families of mankind. The Divine unity to which history was reduced must have reacted on Israel's views of Nature, and made it easier to feel one God also there. Now, as a matter of fact, the imagination of the unity of Nature, the belief in a reason and method pervading all things,

[1] I put it this way only for the sake of making the logic clear; for it is a mistake to say that the prophets at any time held merely theoretic convictions. All their conviction was really experimental—never held apart from some illustration or proof of principle in actual history.

was very powerfully advanced in Israel throughout the Assyrian period.

We may find an illustration of this in the greater, deeper meaning in which the prophets use the old national name of Israel's God—Jehovah Ṣeba'oth, *Jehovah of Hosts.* This title, which came into frequent use under the early kings, when Israel's vocation was to win freedom by war, meant then (as far as we can gather) only *Jehovah of the armies of Israel*—the God of battles, the people's leader in war,[1] whose home was Jerusalem, the people's capital, and His sanctuary their battle emblem, the Ark. Now the prophets hear Jehovah go forth (as Amos does) from the same place, but to them the Name has a far deeper significance. They never define it, but they use it in associations where *hosts* must mean something different from the

[1] יהוה צבאות: 1 Sam. i. 3; iv. 4; xvii. 45, where it is explained by the parallel phrase *God of the armies of Israel*; 2 Sam. vi. 2, where it is connected with Israel's battle emblem, the Ark (cf. Jer. xxii. 18); and so throughout Samuel and Kings, and also Chronicles, the Psalms, and most prophets. The plural צבאות is never used in the Old Testament except of human hosts, and generally of the armies or hosts of Israel. The theory therefore which sees the same meaning in the Divine title is probably the correct one. It was first put forward by Herder (*Geist der Eb. Poesie*, ii. 84, 85), and after some neglect it has been revived by Kautzsch (*Z. A. T. W.*, vi. ff.) and Stade (*Gesch.*, i. 437, *n.* 3). The alternatives are that the hosts originally meant those of heaven, either the angels (so, among others, Ewald, *Hist.*, Eng. Ed., iii. 62) or the stars (so Delitzsch, Kuenen, Baudissin, Cheyne, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, i. 11). In the former of these two there is some force; but the reason given for the latter, that the name came to the front in Israel when the people were being drawn into connection with star-worshipping nations, especially Aram, seems to me baseless. Israel had not been long in touch with Aram in Saul's time, yet even then the name is accepted as if one of much earlier origin. A clear account of the argument on the other side to that taken in this note will be found in Smend, *Alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 185 ff.

armies of Israel. To Amos the hosts of Jehovah are not the armies of Israel, but those of Assyria: they are also the nations whom He marshals and marches across the earth, Philistines from Caphtor, Aram from Qir, as well as Israel from Egypt. Nay, more; according to those Doxologies which either Amos or a kindred spirit has added to his lofty argument,[1] Jehovah sways and orders the powers of the heavens: Orion and Pleiades, the clouds from the sea to the mountain peaks where they break, day and night in constant procession. It is in associations like these that the Name is used, either in its old form or slightly changed as *Jehovah God of hosts*, or *the hosts*; and we cannot but feel that the hosts of Jehovah are now looked upon as all the influences of earth and heaven—human armies, stars and powers of nature, which obey His word and work His will.

[1] See below, Chap. XI.

AMOS

"Towers in the distance, like an earth-born Atlas . . . such a man in such a historical position, standing on the confines of light and darkness, like day on the misty mountain-tops."

CHAPTER V

THE BOOK OF AMOS

THE genuineness of the bulk of the Book of Amos is not doubted by any critic. The only passages suspected as interpolations are the three references to Judah, the three famous outbreaks in praise of the might of Jehovah the Creator, the final prospect of a hope that does not gleam in any other part of the book, with a few clauses alleged to reflect a stage of history later than that in which Amos worked.[1] In all, these verses amount to only twenty-six or twenty-seven out of one hundred and forty-six. Each of them can be discussed separately as we reach it, and we may now pass to consider the general course of the prophecy which is independent of them.

The Book of Amos consists of Three Groups of Oracles, under one title, which is evidently meant to cover them all.

The title runs as follows :—

Words of ʿAmoṣ—who was of the herdsmen of Teḳôaʿ—which he saw concerning Israel in the days

[1] The full list of suspected passages is this: (1) References to Judah—ii. 4, 5; vi. 1, *in Zion*; ix. 11, 12. (2) The three Outbreaks of Praise—iv. 13; v. 8, 9; ix. 5, 6. (3) The Final Hope—ix. 8-15, including vv. 11, 12, already mentioned. (4) Clauses alleged to reflect a later stage of history—i. 9-12; v. 1, 2, 15; vi. 2, 14. (5) Suspected for incompatibility—viii. 11-13.

of 'Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jarab'am son of Joash,[1] *king of Israel: two years before the earthquake.*

The Three Sections, with their contents, are as follows:—

First Section: Chaps. I., II. The Heathen's Crimes and Israel's.

A series of short oracles of the same form, directed impartially against the political crimes of all the states of Palestine, and culminating in a more detailed denunciation of the social evils of Israel, whose doom is foretold, beneath the same flood of war as shall overwhelm all her neighbours.

Second Section: Chaps. III.—VI. Israel's Crimes and Doom.

A series of various oracles of denunciation, which have no further logical connection than is supplied by a general sameness of subject, and a perceptible increase of detail and articulateness from beginning to end of the section. They are usually grouped according to the recurrence of the formula *Hear this word*, which stands at the head of our present chaps. iii., iv. and v.; and by the two cries of *Woe* at v. 18 and vi. 1. But even more obvious than these commencements are the various climaxes to which they lead up. These are all threats of judgment, and each is more strenuous or explicit than the one that has preceded it. They close with iii. 15, iv. 3, iv. 12, v. 17, v. 27 and vi. 14; and according to them the oracles may be conveniently divided into six groups.

1. III. 1-15. After the main theme of judgment is stated in 1, 2, we have in 3-8 a parenthesis on the prophet's right to threaten doom; after which 9-15, following directly on 2, emphasise the social disorder, threaten the land with invasion, the people with extinction and the overthrow of their civilisation.

[1] So designated to distinguish him from the first Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

2. IV. 1-3, beginning with the formula *Hear this word*, is directed against women and describes the siege of the capital and their captivity.

3. IV. 4-12, with no opening formula, contrasts the people's vain propitiation of God by ritual with His treatment of them by various physical chastisements—drought, blight and locusts, pestilence, earthquake—and summons them to prepare for another, unnamed, visitation. *Jehovah God of Hosts is His Name.*

4. V. 1-17, beginning with the formula *Hear this word*, and a dirge over a vision of the nation's defeat, attacks, like the previous group, the lavish ritual, sets in contrast to it Jehovah's demands for justice and civic purity; and, offering a reprieve if Israel will repent, closes with the prospect of an universal mourning (vv. 16, 17), which, though introduced by a *therefore*, has no logical connection with what precedes it.

5. V. 18-26 is the first of the two groups that open with *Woe*. Affirming that the eagerly expected *Day of Jehovah* will be darkness and disaster on disaster inevitable (18-20), it again emphasises Jehovah's desire for righteousness rather than worship (21-26), and closes with the threat of captivity beyond Damascus. *Jehovah God of Hosts is His Name*, as at the close of 3.

6. VI. 1-14. The second *Woe*, on them *that are at ease in Zion* (1, 2): a satire on the luxuries of the rich and their indifference to the national suffering (3-6): captivity must come, with the desolation of the land (9, 10); and in a peroration the prophet reiterates a general downfall of the nation because of its perversity. *A Nation*—needless to name it!—will oppress Israel from Hamath to the River of the Arabah.

Third Section: Chaps. VII.—IX. Visions with Interludes.

The Visions betray traces of development; but they are interrupted by a piece of narrative and addresses on the same themes as chaps. iii.—vi. The First two Visions (vii. 1-6) are of disasters—locusts and drought—in the realm of nature; they are averted by prayer from Amos. The Third (7-9) is in the sphere, not of nature, but history: Jehovah standing with a plumbline, as if to show the nation's fabric to be utterly twisted, announces that it shall be overthrown, and that the dynasty of Jeroboam

must be put to the sword. Upon this mention of the king, the first in the book, there starts the narrative (10-17) of how Amaziah, priest at Bethel—obviously upon hearing the prophet's threat—sent word to Jeroboam; and then (whether before or after getting a reply) proceeded to silence Amos, who, however, reiterates his prediction of doom, again described as captivity in a foreign land, and adds a FOURTH VISION (viii. 1-3), of the Ḳaits or *Summer Fruit*, which suggests Ḳêts, or *End* of the Nation. Here it would seem Amos' discourses at Bethel take end. Then comes viii. 4-6, another exposure of the sins of the rich; followed by a triple pronouncement of doom (7), again in the terms of physical calamities—earthquake (8), eclipse (9, 10), and famine (11-14), in the last of which the public worship is again attacked. A FIFTH VISION, of the Lord by the Altar commanding to smite (ix. 1), is followed by a powerful threat of the hopelessness of escape from God's punishment (ix. 1*b*-4); the third of the great apostrophes to the might of Jehovah (5, 6); another statement of the equality in judgment of Israel with other peoples, and of their utter destruction (7-8*a*). Then (8*b*) we meet the first qualification of the hitherto unrelieved sentence of death. Captivity is described, not as doom, but as discipline (9): the sinners of the people, scoffers at doom, shall die (10). And this seems to leave room for two final oracles of restoration and glory, the only two in the book, which are couched in the exact terms of the promises of later prophecy (11-15) and are by many denied to Amos.

Such is the course of the prophesying of Amos. To have traced it must have made clear to us the unity of his book,[1] as well as the character of the period to which he belonged. But it also furnishes us with a good deal of evidence towards the answer of such necessary questions as these—whether we can fix an exact date for the whole or any part, and whether we can trace any logical or historical development through the chapters, either as these now stand, or in some such re-arrangement as we saw to be necessary for the authentic prophecies of Isaiah.

[1] Apart from the suspected parentheses already mentioned.

Let us take first the simplest of these tasks—to ascertain the general period of the book. Twice—by the title and by the portion of narrative[1]—we are pointed to the reign of Jeroboam II., *circa* 783—743; other historical allusions suit the same years. The principalities of Palestine are all standing, except Gath;[2] but the great northern cloud which carries their doom has risen and is ready to burst. Now Assyria, we have seen, had become fatal to Palestine as early as 854. Infrequent invasions of Syria had followed, in one of which, in 803, Rimmon Nirari III. had subjected Tyre and Sidon, besieged Damascus, and received tribute from Israel. So far then as the Assyrian data are concerned, the Book of Amos might have been written early in the reign of Jeroboam. Even then was the storm lowering as he describes it. Even then had the lightning broken over Damascus. There are other symptoms, however, which demand a later date. They seem to imply, not only Uzziah's overthrow of Gath,[3] and Jeroboam's conquest of Moab[4] and of Aram,[5] but that establishment of Israel's political influence from Lebanon to the Dead Sea, which must have taken Jeroboam several years to accomplish. With this agree other features of the prophecy—the sense of political security in Israel, the

[1] Chap. vii.

[2] And, if vi. 2 be genuine, Hamath.

[3] 2 Chron. xxvi. 6. In the list of the Philistine cities, Amos i. 6-8, Gath does not occur, and in harmony with this in vi. 2 it is said to be overthrown; see pp. 173 f.

[4] 2 Kings. In Amos ii. 3 the ruler of Moab is called, not king, but שׁוֹפֵט, or regent, such as Jeroboam substituted for the king of Moab.

[5] According to Grätz's emendation of vi. 13: *we have taken Lo-Debar and Karnaim.* Perhaps too in iii. 12, though the verse is very obscure, some settlement of Israelites in Damascus is implied. For Jeroboam's conquest of Aram (2 Kings xiv. 28), see p. 177.

large increase of wealth, the ample and luxurious buildings, the gorgeous ritual, the easy ability to recover from physical calamities, the consequent carelessness and pride of the upper classes. All these things imply that the last Syrian invasions of Israel in the beginning of the century were at least a generation behind the men into whose careless faces the prophet hurled his words of doom. During this interval Assyria had again advanced—in 775, in 773 and in 772.[1] None of these expeditions, however, had come south of Damascus, and this, their invariable arrest at some distance from the proper territory of Israel, may have further flattered the people's sense of security, though probably the truth was that Jeroboam, like some of his predecessors, bought his peace by tribute to the emperor. In 765, when the Assyrians for the second time invaded Hadrach, in the neighbourhood of Damascus, their records mention a pestilence, which, both because their armies were then in Syria, and because the plague generally spreads over the whole of Western Asia, may well have been the pestilence mentioned by Amos. In 763 a total eclipse of the sun took place, and is perhaps implied by the ninth verse of his eighth chapter. If this double allusion to pestilence and eclipse be correct, it brings the book down to the middle of the century and the latter half of Jeroboam's long reign. In 755 the Assyrians came back to Hadrach; in 754 to Arpad: with these exceptions Syria was untroubled by them till after 745. It was probably these quiet years in which Amos found Israel *at ease in Zion.*[2] If we

[1] In 775 to Erini, "the country of the cedars"—that is, Mount Amanus, near the Gulf of Antioch; in 773 to Damascus; in 772 to Hadrach.

[2] vi. 1,

went down further, within the more forward policy of Tiglath-Pileser, who ascended the throne in 745 and besieged Arpad from 743 to 740, we should find an occasion for the urgency with which Amos warns Israel that the invasion of her land and the overthrow of the dynasty of Jeroboam will be immediate.[1] But Amos might have spoken as urgently even before Tiglath-Pileser's accession; and the probability that Hosea, who prophesied within Jeroboam's reign, quotes from Amos seems to imply that the prophecies of the latter had been current for some time.

Towards the middle of the eighth century—is, therefore, the most definite date to which we are able to assign the Book of Amos. At so great a distance the difference of a few unmarked years is invisible. It is enough that we know the moral dates—the state of national feeling, the personages alive, the great events which are behind the prophet, and the still greater which are imminent. We can see that Amos wrote in the political pride of the latter years of Jeroboam's reign, after the pestilence and eclipse of the sixties, and before the advance of Tiglath-Pileser in the last forties, of the eighth century.

A particular year is indeed offered by the title of the book, which, if not by Amos himself, must be from only a few years later:[2] *Words of Amos, which he saw in the days of Uzziah and of Jeroboam, two years before the earthquake.* This was the great earthquake of which other prophets speak as having happened in the days

[1] vii. 9.

[2] Even König denies that the title is from Amos (*Einleitung*, 307); yet the ground on which he does so, the awkwardness of the double relative, does not appear sufficient. One does not write a title in the same style as an ordinary sentence.

of Uzziah.[1] But we do not know where to place the year of the earthquake, and are as far as ever from a definite date.

The mention of the earthquake, however, introduces us to the answer of another of our questions—whether, with all its unity, the Book of Amos reveals any lines of progress, either of event or of idea, either historical or logical.

Granting the truth of the title, that Amos had his prophetic eyes opened two years before the earthquake, it will be a sign of historical progress if we find in the book itself any allusions to the earthquake. Now these are present. In the first division we find none, unless the threat of God's visitation in the form of a shaking of the land be considered as a tremor communicated to the prophet's mind from the recent upheaval. But in the second division there is an obvious reference: the last of the unavailing chastisements, with which Jehovah has chastised His people, is described as a *great overturning*.[2] And in the third division, in two passages, the judgment, which Amos has already stated will fall in the form of an invasion, is also figured in the terms of an earthquake. Nor does this exhaust the tremors which that awful convulsion had started; but throughout the second and third divisions there is a constant sense of instability, of the liftableness and breakableness of the very ground of life. Of course, as we shall see, this was due to the prophet's knowledge of the moral explosiveness of society in Israel; but he could hardly have described the results of that in the terms he has used, unless himself and his hearers had recently felt the ground quake under them, and seen

[1] Zech. xiv. 5, and probably Isa. ix. 9, 10 (Eng.). [2] iv. 11.

whole cities topple over. If, then, Amos began to prophesy two years before the earthquake, the bulk of his book was spoken, or at least written down, after the earthquake had left all Israel trembling.[1]

This proof of progress in the book is confirmed by another feature. In the abstract given above it is easy to see that the judgments of the Lord upon Israel were of a twofold character. Some were physical—famine, drought, blight, locusts, earthquake; and some were political—battle, defeat, invasion, captivity. Now it is significant—and I do not think the point has been previously remarked—that not only are the physical represented as happening first, but that at one time the prophet seems to have understood that no others would be needed, that indeed God did not reveal to him the imminence of political disaster till He had exhausted the discipline of physical calamities. For this we have double evidence. In chapter iv. Amos reports that the Lord has sought to rouse Israel out of the moral lethargy into which their religious services have soothed them, by withholding bread and water;

[1] Of course it is always possible to suspect—and let us by all means exhaust the possibilities of suspicion—that the title has been added by a scribe, who interpreted the forebodings of judgment which Amos expresses in the terms of earthquake as if they were the predictions of a real earthquake, and was anxious to show, by inserting the title, how they were fulfilled in the great convulsion of Uzziah's days. But to such a suspicion we have a complete answer. No later scribe, who understood the book he was dealing with, would have prefixed to it a title, with the motive just suspected, when in chap. iv. he read that an earthquake had just taken place. The very fact that such a title appears over a book, which speaks of the earthquake as past, surely attests the *bona fides* of the title. With that mention in chap. iv. of the earthquake as past, none would have ventured to say that Amos began to prophesy before the earthquake, unless they had known this to be the case.

by blighting their orchards; by a pestilence, a thoroughly Egyptian one; and by an earthquake. But these having failed to produce repentance, God must visit the people once more: how, the prophet does not say, leaving the imminent terror unnamed, but we know that the Assyrian overthrow is meant. Now precisely parallel to this is the course of the Visions in chapter vii. The Lord caused Amos to see (whether in fancy or in fact we need not now stop to consider) the plague of locusts. It was so bad as to threaten Israel with destruction. But Amos interceded, and God answered, *It shall not be.* Similarly with a plague of drought. But then the Vision shifts from the realm of nature to that of politics. The Lord sets the plumbline to the fabric of Israel's life: this is found hopelessly bent and unstable. It must be pulled down, and the pulling down shall be political: the family of Jeroboam is to be slain, the people are to go into captivity. The next Vision, therefore, is of the End—the Final Judgment of war and defeat, which is followed only by Silence.

Thus, by a double proof, we see not only that the Divine method in that age was to act first by physical chastisement, and only then by an inevitable, ultimate doom of war and captivity; but that the experience of Amos himself, his own intercourse with the Lord, passed through these two stages. The significance of this for the picture of the prophet's life we shall see in our next chapter. Here we are concerned to ask whether it gives us any clue as to the extant arrangement of his prophecies, or any justification for re-arranging them, as the prophecies of Isaiah have to be re-arranged, according to the various stages of historical development at which they were uttered.

We have just seen that the progress from the physical chastisements to the political doom is reflected in both the last two sections of the book. But the same gradual, cumulative method is attributed to the Divine Providence by the First Section: *for three transgressions, yea, for four, I will not turn it back*; and then follow the same disasters of war and captivity as are threatened in Sections II. and III. But each section does not only thus end similarly; each also begins with the record of an immediate impression made on the prophet by Jehovah (chaps. i. 2; iii. 3-8; vii. 1-9).

To sum up:—The Book of Amos consists of three sections, which seem to have received their present form towards the end of Jeroboam's reign; and which, after emphasising their origin as due to the immediate influence of Jehovah Himself on the prophet, follow pretty much the same course of the Divine dealings with that generation of Israel—a course which began with physical chastisements, that failed to produce repentance, and ended with the irrevocable threat of the Assyrian invasion. Each section, that is to say, starts from the same point, follows much the same direction, and arrives at exactly the same conclusion. Chronologically you cannot put one of them before the other; but from each it is possible to learn the stages of experience through which Amos himself passed—to discover how God taught the prophet, not only by the original intuitions from which all prophecy starts, but by the gradual events of his day both at home and abroad.

[1] Except for the later additions, not by Amos, to be afterwards noted.

This decides our plan for us. We shall first trace the life and experience of Amos, as his book enables us to do; and then we shall examine, in the order in which they lie, the three parallel forms in which, when he was silenced at Bethel, he collected the fruits of that experience, and gave them their final expression.

The style of the book is simple and terse. The fixity of the prophet's aim—upon a few moral principles and the doom they demand—keeps his sentences firm and sharp, and sends his paragraphs rapidly to their climax. That he sees nature only under moral light renders his poetry austere and occasionally savage. His language is very pure. There is no ground for Jerome's charge that he was "imperitus sermone": we shall have to notice only a few irregularities in spelling, due perhaps to the dialect of the deserts in which he passed his life.[1]

The text of the book is for the most part well-preserved; but there are a number of evident corruptions. Of the Greek Version the same holds good as we have said in more detail of the Greek of Hosea.[2] It is sometimes correct where the Hebrew text is not, sometimes suggestive of the emendations required, and sometimes hopelessly astray.

[1] Cf. ii. 13; v. 11.; vi. 8, 10; vii. 9, 16; viii. 8 (?).

[2] See below, p. 221.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN AND THE PROPHET

THE Book of Amos opens one of the greatest stages in the religious development of mankind. Its originality is due to a few simple ideas, which it propels into religion with an almost unrelieved abruptness. But, like all ideas which ever broke upon the world, these also have flesh and blood behind them. Like every other Reformation, this one in Israel began with the conscience and the protest of an individual. Our review of the book has made this plain. We have found in it, not only a personal adventure of a heroic kind, but a progressive series of visions, with some other proofs of a development both of facts and ideas. In short, behind the book there beats a life, and our first duty is to attempt to trace its spiritual history. The attempt is worth the greatest care. "Amos," says a very critical writer,[1] "is one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit."

1. The Man and His Discipline.

Amos i. 1; iii. 3-8; vii. 14, 15.

When charged at the crisis of his career with being but a hireling-prophet, Amos disclaimed the official

[1] Cornill: *Der Israelitische Prophetismus. Five Lectures for the Educated Laity.* 1894.

name and took his stand upon his work as a man: *No prophet I, nor prophet's son, but a herdsman and a dresser of sycomores. Jehovah took me from behind the flock.*[1] We shall enhance our appreciation of this manhood, and of the new order of prophecy which it asserted, if we look for a little at the soil on which it was so bravely nourished.

Six miles south from Bethlehem, as Bethlehem is six from Jerusalem, there rises on the edge of the Judæan plateau, towards the desert, a commanding hill, the ruins on which are still known by the name of Teḳôaʿ.[2]

In the time of Amos Tekoa was a place without sanctity and almost without tradition. The name suggests that the site may at first have been that of a camp. Its fortification by Rehoboam, and the mission of its wise woman to David, are its only previous appearances in history. Nor had nature been less grudging to it than fame. The men of Tekoa looked out upon a desolate and haggard world. South, west and north the view is barred by a range of limestone hills, on one of which directly north the grey towers of Jerusalem are hardly to be discerned from the grey mountain lines. Eastward the prospect is still more desolate, but it is open; the land slopes away for nearly eighteen

[1] Amos vii. 14. See further pp. 76 f.

[2] Khurbet Taḳûaʿ, Hebrew Teḳôaʿ, תְּקוֹעַ, from תקע, *to blow a trumpet* (cf. Jer. vi. 1, *Blow the trumpet in Tekoa*) or *to pitch a tent*. The latter seems the more probable derivation of the name, and suggests a nomadic origin, which agrees with the position of Tekoa on the borders of the desert. Tekoa does not occur in the list of the towns taken by Joshua. There are really no reasons for supposing that some other Tekoa is meant. The two that have been alleged are (1) that Amos exclusively refers to the Northern Kingdom, (2) that sycomores do not grow at such levels as Tekoa. These are dealt with on pp. 79 and 77 respectively.

miles to a depth of four thousand feet. Of this long descent, the first step, lying immediately below the hill of Tekoa, is a shelf of stony moorland with the ruins of vineyards. It is the lowest ledge of the settled life of Judæa. The eastern edge drops suddenly by broken rocks to slopes spotted with bushes of "retem," the broom of the desert, and with patches of poor wheat. From the foot of the slopes the land rolls away in a maze of low hills and shallow dales, that flush green in spring, but for the rest of the year are brown with withered grass and scrub. This is the *Wilderness* or *Pastureland of Tekoa*,[1] across which by night the wild beasts howl, and by day the blackened sites of deserted camps, with the loose cairns that mark the nomads' graves, reveal a human life almost as vagabond and nameless as that of the beasts. Beyond the rolling land is Jeshimon, or Devastation—a chaos of hills, none of whose ragged crests are tossed as high as the shelf of Tekoa, while their flanks shudder down some further thousands of feet, by crumbling precipices and corries choked with debris, to the coast of the Dead Sea. The northern half of this is visible, bright blue against the red wall of Moab, and the level top of the wall, broken only by the valley of the Arnon, constitutes the horizon. Except for the blue water—which shines in its gap between the torn hills like a bit of sky through rifted clouds—it is a very dreary world. Yet the sun breaks over it, perhaps all the more gloriously; mists, rising from the sea simmering in its great vat, drape the nakedness of the desert noon; and through the dry desert night the planets ride with a majesty they cannot assume in our more troubled atmospheres.

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 20.

It is also a very empty and a very silent world, yet every stir of life upon it excites, therefore, the greater vigilance, and man's faculties, relieved from the rush and confusion of events, form the instinct of marking, and reflecting upon, every single phenomenon. And it is a very savage world. Across it all, the towers of Jerusalem give the only signal of the spirit, the one token that man has a history.

Upon this unmitigated wilderness, where life is reduced to poverty and danger; where nature starves the imagination, but excites the faculties of perception and curiosity; with the mountain tops and the sunrise in his face, but above all with Jerusalem so near,—Amos did the work which made him a man, heard the voice of God calling him to be a prophet, and gathered those symbols and figures in which his prophet's message still reaches us with so fresh and so austere an air.

Amos was *among the shepherds of Tekoa.* The word for *shepherd* is unusual, and means the herdsman of a peculiar breed of desert sheep, still under the same name prized in Arabia for the excellence of their wool.[1] And he was *a dresser of sycomores.* The tree, which is not our sycamore, is very easily grown in sandy soil with a little water. It reaches a great height and mass of foliage. The fruit is like a small fig, with a sweet but watery taste, and is eaten only by the poor.

[1] נֹקֵד, nōḳēd, is doubtless the same as the Arabic "naḳḳād," or keeper of the "naḳad," defined by Freytag as a short-legged and deformed race of sheep in the Bahrein province of Arabia, from which comes the proverb "viler than a naḳad"; yet the wool is very fine. The king of Moab is called נוֹקֵד in 2 Kings iii. 4 (A.V. *sheep-master*). In vii. 14 Amos calls himself בּוֹקֵר, *cattleman*, which there is no reason to alter, as some do, to נוֹקֵד.

Born not of the fresh twigs, but of the trunk and older branches, the sluggish lumps are provoked to ripen by pinching or bruising, which seems to be the literal meaning of the term that Amos uses of himself—*a pincher of sycomores*.[1] The sycomore does not grow at so high a level as Tekoa ;[2] and this fact, taken along with the limitation of the ministry of Amos to the Northern Kingdom, has been held to prove that he was originally an Ephraimite, a sycomore-dresser, who had migrated and settled down, as the peculiar phrase of the title says, *among the shepherds of Tekoa*.[3] We shall presently see, however, that his familiarity with life in Northern Israel may easily have been won in other ways than through citizenship in that kingdom; while the very general nature of the definition, *among the shepherds of Tekoa*, does not oblige us to place

[1] בּוֹלֵס, bôlês, probably from a root (found in Æthiopic) balas, *a fig*; hence one who *had to do with figs, handled them, ripened them*.

[2] The Egyptian sycomore, *Ficus sycomorus*, is not found in Syria above one thousand feet above the sea, while Tekoa is more than twice as high as that. Cf. 1 Kings x. 27, *the sycomores that are in the vale* or *valley land*, עֵמֶק ; 1 Chron. xxvii. 28, *the sycomores that are in the low plains*. "The sycamore grows in sand on the edge of the desert as vigorously as in the midst of a well-watered country. Its roots go deep in search of water, which infiltrates as far as the gorges of the hills, and they absorb it freely even where drought seems to reign supreme" (Maspero on the Egyptian sycomore: *The Dawn of Civilization*, translated by McClure, p. 26). "Everywhere on the confines of cultivated ground, and even at some distance from the valley, are fine single sycamores flourishing as though by miracle amid the sand. . . . They drink from water, which has infiltrated from the Nile, and whose existence is nowise betrayed upon the surface of the soil" (*ib.*, 121). Always and still reverenced by Moslem and Christian.

[3] So practically Oort (*Th. Tjidsch.*, 1891, 121 ff.), when compelled to abandon his previous conclusion (*ib.*, 1880, 122 ff.) that the Tekoa of Amos lay in Northern Israel.

either him or his sycomores so high as the village itself. The most easterly township of Judæa, Tekoa commanded the whole of the wilderness beyond, to which indeed it gave its name, *the wilderness of Tekoa*. The shepherds of Tekoa were therefore, in all probability, scattered across the whole region down to the oases on the coast of the Dead Sea, which have generally been owned by one or other of the settled communities in the hill-country above, and may at that time have belonged to Tekoa, just as in Crusading times they belonged to the monks of Hebron, or are to-day cultivated by the Rushaideh Arabs, who pitch their camps not far from Tekoa itself. As you will still find everywhere on the borders of the Syrian desert shepherds nourishing a few fruit-trees round the chief well of their pasture, in order to vary their milk diet, so in some low oasis in the wilderness of Judæa Amos cultivated the poorest, but the most easily grown of fruits, the sycomore.[1] All this pushes Amos and his dwarf sheep deeper into the desert, and emphasises what has been said above, and still remains to be illustrated, of the desert's influence on his discipline as a man and on his speech as a prophet. We ought to remember that in the same desert another prophet was bred, who was also the pioneer of a new dispensation, and whose ministry, both in its strength and its limitations, is much recalled by the ministry of Amos. John the son of Zacharias *grew*

[1] In 1891 we met the Rushaideh, who cultivate Engedi, encamped just below Tekoa. But at other parts of the borders between the hill-country of Judæa and the desert, and between Moab and the desert, we found round most of the herdsmen's central wells a few fig-trees or pomegranates, or even apricots occasionally.

and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.[1] Here, too, our Lord was *with the wild beasts.*[2] How much Amos had been with them may be seen from many of his metaphors. *The lion roareth, who shall not fear? . . . As when the shepherd rescueth from the mouth of the lion two shin-bones or a bit of an ear. . . . It shall be as when one is fleeing from a lion, and a bear cometh upon him; and he entereth a house, and leaneth his hand on the wall, and a serpent biteth him.*

As a wool-grower, however, Amos must have had his yearly journeys among the markets of the land; and to such were probably due his opportunities of familiarity with Northern Israel, the originals of his vivid pictures of her town-life, her commerce and the worship at her great sanctuaries. One hour westward from Tekoa would bring him to the high-road between Hebron and the North, with its troops of pilgrims passing to Beersheba.[3] It was but half-an-hour more to the watershed and an open view of the Philistine plain. Bethlehem was only six, Jerusalem twelve miles from Tekoa. Ten miles farther, across the border of Israel, lay Bethel with its temple, seven miles farther Gilgal, and twenty miles farther still Samaria the capital, in all but two days' journey from Tekoa. These had markets as well as shrines;[4] their annual festivals would be also great fairs. It is certain that Amos visited them; it is even possible that he went to Damascus, in which the Israelites had at the time their own quarters for trading. By road and market he would meet with men of other lands. Phœnician pedlars, or Canaanites as they were called,

[1] Luke i. 80. [2] Mark i. 18. [3] v. 5; viii. 14. [4] See p. 36

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came up to buy the homespun for which the housewives of Israel were famed[1]—hard-faced men who were also willing to purchase slaves, and haunted even the battle-fields of their neighbours for this sinister purpose. Men of Moab, at the time subject to Israel; Aramean hostages; Philistines who held the export trade to Egypt,—these Amos must have met and may have talked with; their dialects scarcely differed from his own. It is no distant, desert echo of life which we hear in his pages, but the thick and noisy rumour of caravan and market-place: how the plague was marching up from Egypt;[2] ugly stories of the Phœnician slave-trade;[3] rumours of the advance of the awful Power, which men were hardly yet accustomed to name, but which had already twice broken from the North upon Damascus. Or it was the progress of some national mourning—how lamentation sprang up in the capital, rolled along the highways, and was re-echoed from the husbandmen and vinedressers on the hillsides.[4] Or, at closer quarters, we see and hear the bustle of the great festivals and fairs—the *solemn assemblies*, the reeking holocausts, the *noise of songs and viols*;[5] the brutish religious zeal kindling into drunkenness and lust on the very steps of the altar;[6] the embezzlement of pledges by the priests, the covetous restlessness of the traders, their false measures, their entanglement of the poor in debt;[7] the careless luxury of the rich, their *banquets, buckets of wine, ivory couches*, pretentious, preposterous music.[8] These things are described as by an eyewitness. Amos was not a citizen of the Northern Kingdom, to which he almost

[1] Prov. xxxi. 24.
[2] vi. 10.
[3] i. 9.
[4] v. 16.
[5] v. 21 ff.
[6] ii. 7, 8.
[7] viii. 4 ff.
[8] vi. 1, 4-7.

exclusively refers; but it was because he went up and down in it, using those eyes which the desert air had sharpened, that he so thoroughly learned the wickedness of its people, the corruption of Israel's life in every rank and class of society.[1]

But the convictions which he applied to this life Amos learned at home. They came to him over the desert, and without further material signal than was flashed to Tekoa from the towers of Jerusalem. This is placed beyond doubt by the figures in which he describes his call from Jehovah. Contrast his story, so far as he reveals it, with that of another. Some twenty years later, Isaiah of Jerusalem saw the Lord in the Temple, high and lifted up, and all the inaugural vision of this greatest of the prophets was conceived in the figures of the Temple—the altar, the smoke, the burning coals. But to his predecessor *among the shepherds of Tekoa*, although revelation also starts from Jerusalem, it reaches him, not in the sacraments of her sanctuary, but across the bare pastures, and as it were in the roar of a lion. *Jehovah from Zion roareth, and uttereth His voice from Jerusalem.*[2] We read of no formal process of consecration for this first of the prophets. Through his clear desert air, the word of God breaks upon him without medium or sacrament. And the native vigilance of the man is startled, is convinced by it, beyond all argument or question. *The lion hath roared, who shall not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*

These words are taken from a passage in which Amos illustrates prophecy from other instances of his shepherd life. We have seen what a school of

[1] See pp. 136 f. [2] i. 2.

vigilance the desert is. Upon the bare surface all that stirs is ominous. Every shadow, every noise—the shepherd must know what is behind and be warned. Such a vigilance Amos would have Israel apply to his own message, and to the events of their history. Both of these he compares to certain facts of desert life, behind which his shepherdly instincts have taught him to feel an ominous cause. *Do two men walk together except they have trysted?*—except they have made an appointment. Hardly in the desert; for there men meet and take the same road by chance as seldom as ships at sea. *Doth a lion roar in the jungle and have no prey, or a young lion let out his voice in his den except he be taking something?* The hunting lion is silent till his quarry be in sight; when the lonely shepherd hears the roar across the desert, he knows the lion leaps upon his prey, and he shudders as Israel ought to do when they hear God's voice by the prophet, for this also is never loosened but for some grim fact, some leap of doom. Or *doth a little bird fall on the snare earthwards and there be no noose upon her?* The reading may be doubtful, but the meaning is obvious: no one ever saw a bird pulled roughly down to earth when it tried to fly away without knowing there was the loop of a snare about her. Or *does the snare itself rise up from the ground, except indeed it be capturing something?*—except there be in the trap or net something to flutter, struggle and so lift it up. Traps do not move without life in them. Or *is the alarum trumpet*[1] *blown in a city*—for instance, in high Tekoa up there, when some Arab raid sweeps from the desert

[1] שׁוֹפָר, as has been pointed out, means in early Israel always the trumpet blown as a summons to war; only in later Israel was the name given to the temple trumpet.

on to the fields—*and do the people not tremble?* Or *shall calamity happen in a city and Jehovah not have done it? Yea, the Lord Jehovah doeth nothing but He has revealed His purpose to His servants the prophets.* My voice of warning and these events of evil in your midst have the same cause—Jehovah—behind them. *The lion hath roared, who shall not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*[1]

We cannot miss the personal note which rings through this triumph in the reality of things unseen. Not only does it proclaim a man of sincerity and conviction: it is resonant with the discipline by which that conviction was won—were won, too, the freedom from illusion and the power of looking at facts in the face, which Amos alone of his contemporaries possessed.

St. Bernard has described the first stage of the Vision of God as the Vision Distributive, in which the eager mind distributes her attention upon common things and common duties in themselves. It was in this elementary school that the earliest of the new prophets passed his apprenticeship and received his gifts. Others excel Amos in the powers of the imagination and the intellect. But by the incorrupt habits of his shepherd's life, by daily wakefulness to its alarms and daily faithfulness to its opportunities, he was trained in that simple power of appreciating facts and causes, which, applied to the great phenomena of the spirit and of history, forms his distinction among his peers. In this we find perhaps the reason why he records of himself no solemn hour of cleansing and initiation. *Jehovah took me from following the flock,*

[1] See further on this important passage pp. 89 ff.

and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel. Amos was of them of whom it is written, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." Through all his hard life, this shepherd had kept his mind open and his conscience quick, so that when the word of God came to him he knew it, as fast as he knew the roar of the lion across the moor. Certainly there is no habit, which, so much as this of watching facts with a single eye and a responsible mind, is indispensable alike in the humblest duties and in the highest speculations of life. When Amos gives those naïve illustrations of how real the voice of God is to him, we receive them as the tokens of a man, honest and awake. Little wonder that he refuses to be reckoned among the professional prophets of his day, who found their inspiration in excitement and trance. Upon him the impulses of the Deity come in no artificial and morbid ecstasy, removed as far as possible from real life. They come upon him, as it were, in the open air. They appeal to the senses of his healthy and expert manhood. They convince him of their reality with the same force as do the most startling events of his lonely shepherd watches. *The lion hath roared, who shall not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*

The influence of the same discipline is still visible when Amos passes from the facts of his own consciousness to the facts of his people's life. His day in Israel sweltered with optimism. The glare of wealth, the fulsome love of country, the rank incense of a religion that was without morality—these thickened all the air, and neither the people nor their rulers had any vision. But Amos carried with him his clear desert atmosphere and his desert eyes. He saw the

raw facts: the poverty, the cruel negligence of the rich, the injustice of the rulers, the immorality of the priests. The meaning of these things he questioned with as much persistence as he questioned every suspicious sound or sight upon those pastures of Tekoa. He had no illusions: he knew a mirage when he saw one. Neither the military pride of the people, fostered by recent successes over Syria, nor the dogmas of their religion, which asserted Jehovah's swift triumph upon the heathen, could prevent him from knowing that the immorality of Israel meant Israel's political downfall. He was one of those recruits from common life, by whom religion and the state have at all times been reformed. Springing from the laity and very often from among the working classes, their freedom from dogmas and routine, as well as from the compromising interests of wealth, rank and party, renders them experts in life to a degree that almost no professional priest, statesman or journalist, however honest or sympathetic, can hope to rival. Into politics they bring facts, but into religion they bring vision.

It is of the utmost significance that this reformer, this founder of the highest order of prophecy in Israel, should not only thus begin with facts, but to the very end be occupied with almost nothing else, than the vision and record of them. In Amos there is but one prospect of the Ideal. It does not break till the close of his book, and then in such contrast to the plain and final indictments, which constitute nearly all the rest of his prophesying, that many have not unnaturally denied to him the verses which contain it. Throughout the other chapters we have but the exposure of present facts, material and moral, nor the sight of any future more distant than to-morrow and

the immediate consequences of to-day's deeds. Let us mark this. The new prophecy which Amos started in Israel reached Divine heights of hope, unfolded infinite powers of moral and political regeneration—dared to blot out all the past, dared to believe all things possible in the future. But it started from the truth about the moral situation of the present. Its first prophet not only denied every popular dogma and ideal, but appears not to have substituted for them any others. He spent his gifts of vision on the discovery and appreciation of facts. Now this is necessary, not only in great reformations of religion, but at almost every stage in her development. We are constantly disposed to abuse even the most just and necessary of religious ideals as substitutes for experience or as escapes from duty, and to boast about the future before we have understood or mastered the present. Hence the need of realists like Amos. Though they are destitute of dogma, of comfort, of hope, of the ideal, let us not doubt that they also stand in the succession of the prophets of the Lord.

Nay, this is a stage of prophecy on which may be fulfilled the prayer of Moses: *Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!* To see the truth and tell it, to be accurate and brave about the moral facts of our day—to this extent the Vision and the Voice are possible for every one of us. Never for us may the doors of heaven open, as they did for him who stood on the threshold of the earthly temple, and he saw the Lord enthroned, while the Seraphim of the Presence sang the glory. Never for us may the skies fill with that tempest of life which Ezekiel beheld from Shinar, and above it the sapphire throne, and on the throne the likeness of a man, the likeness

of the glory of the Lord. Yet let us remember that to see facts as they are and to tell the truth about them—this also is prophecy. We may inhabit a sphere which does not prompt the imagination, but is as destitute of the historic and traditional as was the wilderness of Tekoa. All the more may our unglamoured eyes be true to the facts about us. Every common day leads forth her duties as shining as every night leads forth her stars. The deeds and the fortunes of men are in our sight, and spell, to all who will honestly read, the very Word of the Lord. If only we be loyal, then by him who made the rude sounds and sights of the desert his sacraments, and whose vigilance of things seen and temporal became the vision of things unseen and eternal, we also shall see God, and be sure of His ways with men.

Before we pass from the desert discipline of the prophet, we must notice one of its effects, which, while it greatly enhanced the clearness of his vision, undoubtedly disabled Amos for the highest prophetic rank. He who lives in the desert lives without patriotism—detached and aloof. He may see the throng of men more clearly than those who move among it. He cannot possibly so much feel for them. Unlike Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Amos was not a citizen of the kingdom against which he prophesied, and indeed no proper citizen of any kingdom, but a nomad herdsman, hovering on the desert borders of Judæa. He saw Israel from the outside. His message to her is achieved with scarcely one sob in his voice. For the sake of the poor and the oppressed among the people he is indignant. But with the erring, staggering nation as a whole he has no real sympathy. His pity for her is exhausted in one elegy and two

brief intercessions ; hardly more than once does he even call her to repentance. His sense of justice, in fact, had almost never to contend with his love. This made Amos the better witness, but the worse prophet. He did not rise so high as his great successors, because he did not so feel himself one with the people whom he was forced to condemn, because he did not bear their fate as his own nor travail for their new birth. "Ihm fehlt die Liebe." Love is the element lacking in his prophecy ; and therefore the words are true of him, which were uttered of his great follower across this same wilderness of Judæa, that mighty as were his voice and his message to prepare the way of the Lord, yet *the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.*

2. The Word and its Origins.

Amos i. 2 ; iii. 3-8 ; and *passim.*

We have seen the preparation of the Man for the Word. We are now to ask, Whence came the Word to the Man ?—the Word that made him a prophet. What were its sources and sanctions outside himself ? These involve other questions. How much of his message did Amos inherit from the previous religion of his people ? And how much did he teach for the first time in Israel ? And again, how much of this new element did he owe to the great events of his day ? And how much demands some other source of inspiration ?

To all these inquiries, outlines of the answers ought by this time to have become visible. We have seen that the contents of the Book of Amos consist almost entirely of two kinds : facts, actual or imminent, in the history of his people ; and certain moral principles of

the most elementary order. Amos appeals to no dogma nor form of law, nor to any religious or national institution. Still more remarkably, he does not rely upon miracle nor any so-called "supernatural sign." To employ the terms of Mazzini's famous formula, Amos draws his materials solely from "conscience and history." Within himself he hears certain moral principles speak in the voice of God, and certain events of his day he recognises as the judicial acts of God. The principles condemn the living generation of Israel as morally corrupt; the events threaten the people with political extinction. From this agreement between inward conviction and outward event Amos draws his full confidence as a prophet, and enforces on the people his message of doom as God's own word.

The passage in which Amos most explicitly illustrates this harmony between event and conviction is one whose metaphors we have already quoted in proof of the desert's influence upon the prophet's life. When Amos asks, *Can two walk together except they have made an appointment?* his figure is drawn, as we have seen, from the wilderness in which two men will hardly meet except they have arranged to do so; but the truth, he would illustrate by the figure, is that two sets of phenomena which coincide must have sprung from a common purpose. Their conjunction forbids mere chance. What kind of phenomena he means, he lets us see in his next instance: *Doth a lion roar in the jungle and have no prey? Doth a young lion let forth his voice from his den except he be catching something?* That is, those ominous sounds never happen without some fell and terrible deed happening along with them. Amos thus plainly hints that the two phenomena on whose coincidence he insists are an utterance on one side, and

on the other side a deed fraught with destruction. The reading of the next metaphor about the bird and the snare is uncertain; at most what it means is that you never see signs of distress or a vain struggle to escape without there being, though out of sight, some real cause for them.[1] But from so general a principle he returns in his fourth metaphor to the special coincidence between utterance and deed. *Is the alarum-trumpet blown in a city and do the people not tremble?* Of course they do; they know such sound is never made without the approach of calamity. But who is the author of every calamity? God Himself: *Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?* Very well then; we have seen that common life has many instances in which, when an ominous sound is heard, it is because it is closely linked with a fatal deed. These happen together, not by mere chance, but because the one is the expression, the warning or the explanation of the other. And we also know that fatal deeds which happen to any community in Israel are from Jehovah. He is behind them. But they, too, are accompanied by a warning voice from the same source as themselves. This is the voice which the prophet hears in his heart—the moral conviction which he feels as the Word of God. *The Lord Jehovah doeth nothing but He hath revealed His counsel to His servants the prophets.* Mark the grammar: the revelation comes first to the prophet's heart; then he sees and recognises the event, and is confident to give his message about it. So Amos,

[1] *Shall a little bird fall on the snare earthwards and there be no noose about her? Shall a snare rise from the ground and not be taking something?* On this see p. 82. Its meaning seems to be equivalent to the Scottish proverb: "There's aye some water whan the stirkie droons."

repeating his metaphor, sums up his argument. *The Lion hath roared, who shall not fear?*—certain that there is more than sound to happen. *The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*—certain that what Jehovah has spoken to him inwardly is likewise no mere sound, but that deeds of judgment are about to happen, as the ominous voice requires they should.[1]

The prophet then is made sure of his message by the agreement between the inward convictions of his soul and the outward events of the day. When these walk together, it proves that they have come of a common purpose. He who causes the events—it is Jehovah Himself, *for shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?*—must be author also of the inner voice or conviction which agrees with them. *Who* then *can but prophesy?* Observe again that no support is here derived from miracle; nor is any claim made for the prophet on the ground of his ability to foretell the event. It is the agreement of the idea with the fact, their evident common origin in the purpose of Jehovah, which makes a man sure that he has in him the Word of God. Both are necessary, and together are enough. Are we then to leave the origin of the Word in this coincidence of fact and thought—as it were an electric flash produced by the contact of conviction with event? Hardly: there are questions behind this coincidence. For instance, as to how the two react on each other—the event provoking the conviction, the conviction interpreting the event? The argument of Amos seems to imply that the ethical principles are experienced by the prophet prior to the events which justify them.

[1] There is thus no reason to alter the words *who shall not prophesy* to *who shall not tremble*—as Wellhausen does. To do so is to blunt the point of the argument.

Is this so, or was the shock of the events required to awaken the principles? And if the principles were prior, whence did Amos derive them? These are some questions that will lead us to the very origins of revelation.

The greatest of the events with which Amos and his contemporaries dealt was the Assyrian invasion. In a previous chapter we have tried to estimate the intellectual effects of Assyria on prophecy.[1] Assyria widened the horizon of Israel, put the world to Hebrew eyes into a new perspective, vastly increased the possibilities of history and set to religion a novel order of problems. We can trace the effects upon Israel's conceptions of God, of man and even of nature.[2] Now it might be plausibly argued that the new prophecy in Israel was first stirred and quickened by all this mental shock and strain, and that even the loftier ethics of the prophets were thus due to the advance of Assyria. For, as the most vigilant watchmen of their day, the prophets observed the rise of that empire, and felt its fatality for Israel. Turning then to inquire the Divine reasons for such a destruction, they found these in Israel's sinfulness, to the full extent of which their hearts were at last awakened. According to such a theory the prophets were politicians first and moralists afterwards: alarmists to begin with, and preachers of repentance only second. Or—to recur to the language employed above—the prophets' experience of the historical event preceded their conviction of the moral principle which agreed with it.

In support of such a theory it is pointed out that after all the most original element in the prophecy of

[1] See Chap. IV. [2] See pp. 53 ff.

the eighth century was the announcement of Israel's fall and exile. The Righteousness of Jehovah had often previously been enforced in Israel, but never had any voice drawn from it this awful conclusion that the nation must perish. The first in Israel to dare this was Amos, and surely what enabled him to do so was the imminence of Assyria upon his people. Again, such a theory might plausibly point to the opening verse of the Book of Amos, with its unprefaced, unexplained pronouncement of doom upon Israel:—

The Lord roareth from Zion,
And giveth voice from Jerusalem;
And the pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the summit of Carmel is withered!

Here, it might be averred, is the earliest prophet's earliest utterance. Is it not audibly the voice of a man in a panic—such a panic as, ever on the eve of historic convulsions, seizes the more sensitive minds of a doomed people? The distant Assyrian thunder has reached Amos, on his pastures, unprepared—unable to articulate its exact meaning, and with only faith enough to hear in it the voice of his God. He needs reflection to unfold its contents; and the process of this reflection we find through the rest of his book. There he details for us, with increasing clearness, both the ethical reasons and the political results of that Assyrian terror, by which he was at first so wildly shocked into prophecy.

But the panic-born are always the still-born; and it is simply impossible that prophecy, in all her ethical and religious vigour, can have been the daughter of so fatal a birth. If we look again at the evidence which is quoted from Amos in favour of such a theory, we

shall see how fully it is contradicted by other features of his book.

To begin with, we are not certain that the terror of the opening verse of Amos is the Assyrian terror. Even if it were, the opening of a book does not necessarily represent the writer's earliest feelings. The rest of the chapters contain visions and oracles which obviously date from a time when Amos was not yet startled by Assyria, but believed that the punishment which Israel required might be accomplished through a series of physical calamities—locusts, drought and pestilence.[1] Nay, it was not even these earlier judgments, preceding the Assyrian, which stirred the word of God in the prophet. He introduces them with a *now* and a *therefore*. That is to say, he treats them only as the consequence of certain facts, the conclusion of certain premises. These facts and premises are moral—they are exclusively moral. They are the sins of Israel's life, regarded without illusion and without pity. They are certain simple convictions, which fill the prophet's heart, about the impossibility of the survival of any state which is so perverse and so corrupt.

This origin of prophecy in moral facts and moral intuitions, which are in their beginning independent of political events, may be illustrated by several other points. For instance, the sins which Amos marked in Israel were such as required no "red dawn of judgment" to expose their flagrance and fatality. The abuse of justice, the cruelty of the rich, the shameless immorality of the priests, are not sins which we feel only in the cool of the day, when God Himself draws near to judgment. They are such things as make men

[1] See pp. 69 f.

shiver in the sunshine. And so the Book of Amos, and not less that of Hosea, tremble with the feeling that Israel's social corruption is great enough of itself, without the aid of natural convulsions, to shake the very basis of national life. *Shall not the land tremble for this*, Amos says after reciting some sins, *and every one that dwelleth therein?* [1] Not drought nor pestilence nor invasion is needed for Israel's doom, but the elemental force of ruin which lies in the people's own wickedness. This is enough to create gloom long before the political skies be overcast—or, as Amos himself puts it, this is enough

To cause the sun to go down at noon,
And to darken the earth in the clear day.[2]

And once more—in spite of Assyria the ruin may be averted, if only the people will repent: *Seek good and not evil, and Jehovah of hosts will be with you, as you say.*[3] Assyria, however threatening, becomes irrelevant to Israel's future from the moment that Israel repents.

Such beliefs, then, are obviously not the results of experience, nor of a keen observation of history. They are the primal convictions of the heart, which are deeper than all experience, and themselves contain the sources of historical foresight. With Amos it was not the outward event which inspired the inward conviction, but the conviction which anticipated and interpreted the event, though when the event came there can be no doubt that it confirmed, deepened, and articulated the conviction.[4]

[1] viii. 8. [2] viii. 9. [3] v. 14.

[4] How far Assyria assisted the development of prophecy we have already seen. But we have been made aware, at the same time, that Assyria's service to Israel in this respect presupposed the possession

But when we have thus tracked the stream of prophecy as far back as these elementary convictions we have not reached the fountain-head. Whence did Amos derive his simple and absolute ethics? Were they original to him? Were they new in Israel? Such questions start an argument which touches the very origins of revelation.

It is obvious that Amos not only takes for granted the laws of righteousness which he enforces: he takes for granted also the people's conscience of them. New, indeed, is the doom which sinful Israel deserves, and original to himself is the proclamation of it; but Amos appeals to the moral principles which justify the doom, as if they were not new, and as if Israel ought always to have known them. This attitude of the prophet to his principles has, in our time, suffered a curious judgment. It has been called an anachronism. So absolute a morality, some say, had never before been taught in Israel; nor had righteousness been so exclusively emphasised as the purpose of Jehovah. Amos and the other prophets of his century were the virtual "creators of ethical monotheism": it could only be by a prophetic licence or prophetic fiction that he appealed to his people's conscience of the standards he promulgated, or condemned his generation to death for not having lived up to them.

Let us see how far this criticism is supported by the facts.

To no sane observer can the religious history of

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by the prophets of certain beliefs in the character and will of their God, Jehovah. The prophets' faith could never have risen to the magnitude of the new problems set to it by Assyria if there had not been already inherent in it that belief in the sovereignty of a Righteousness of which all things material were but the instruments.

Israel appear as anything but a course of gradual development. Even in the moral standards, in respect to which it is confessedly often most difficult to prove growth, the signs of the nation's progress are very manifest. Practices come to be forbidden in Israel and tempers to be mitigated, which in earlier ages were sanctioned to their extreme by the explicit decrees of religion. In the nation's attitude to the outer world sympathies arise, along with ideals of spiritual service, where previously only war and extermination had been enforced in the name of the Deity. Now in such an evolution it is equally indubitable that the longest and most rapid stage was the prophecy of the eighth century. The prophets of that time condemn acts which had been inspired by their immediate predecessors;[1] they abjure, as impeding morality, a ceremonial which the spiritual leaders of earlier generations had felt to be indispensable to religion; and they unfold ideals of the nation's moral destiny, of which older writings give us only the faintest hints. Yet, while the fact of a religious evolution in Israel is thus certain, we must not fall into the vulgar error which interprets evolution as if it were mere addition, nor forget that even in the most creative periods of religion nothing is brought forth which has not already been promised, and, at some earlier stage, placed, so to speak, within reach of the human mind. After all it is the mind which grows; the moral ideals which become visible to its more matured vision are so Divine that, when they present themselves, the mind cannot but think they were always real and always imperative. If we

[1] Compare, for instance, Hosea's condemnation of Jehu's murder of Joram, with Elisha's command to do it; also 2 Kings iii. 19, 25, with Deut. xx. 19.

remember these commonplaces we shall do justice both to Amos and to his critics.

In the first place it is clear that most of the morality which Amos enforced is of that fundamental order which can never have been recognised as the discovery or invention of any prophet. Whatever be their origin, the conscience of justice, the duty of kindness to the poor, the horror of wanton cruelty towards one's enemies, which form the chief principles of Amos, are discernible in man as far back as history allows us to search for them. Should a generation have lost them, they can be brought back to it, never with the thrill of a new lesson, but only with the shame of an old and an abused memory. To neither man nor people can the righteousness which Amos preached appear as a discovery, but always as a recollection and a remorse. And this is most emphatically true of the people of Moses and of Samuel, of Nathan, of Elijah and of the Book of the Covenant. Ethical elements had been characteristic of Israel's religion from the very first. They were not due to a body of written law, but rather to the character of Israel's God, appreciated by the nation in all the great crises of their history.[1] Jehovah had won for Israel freedom and unity. He had been a spirit of justice to their lawgivers and magistrates.[2] He had raised up a succession of consecrated personalities,[3] who by life and word had purified the ideals of the whole people. The results had appeared in the creation of a strong national conscience, which avenged with horror, as *folly in Israel*, the wanton crimes of any person or section of the commonwealth; in the gradual formation of a legal code, founded indeed

[1] See above, p. 10. [2] Isa. xxviii. [3] Amos ii.

in the common custom of the Semites, but greatly more moral than that; and even in the attainment of certain profoundly ethical beliefs about God and His relations, beyond Israel, to all mankind. Now, let us understand once for all, that in the ethics of Amos there is nothing which is not rooted in one or other of these achievements of the previous religion of his people. To this religion Amos felt himself attached in the closest possible way. The word of God comes to him across the desert, as we have seen, yet not out of the air. From the first he hears it rise from that one monument of his people's past which we have found visible on his physical horizon[1]—*from Zion, from Jerusalem*,[2] from the city of David, from the Ark, whose ministers were Moses and Samuel, from the repository of the main tradition of Israel's religion.[3] Amos felt himself in the sacred succession; and his feeling is confirmed by the contents of his book. The details of that civic justice which he demands from his generation are found in the Book of the Covenant—the only one of Israel's great codes which appears by this time to have been in existence;[4] or in those popular proverbs which almost as certainly were found in early Israel.[5]

[1] *Ante*, p. 74. [2] i. 2.

[3] Therefore we see at a glance how utterly inadequate is Renan's brilliant comparison of Amos to a modern revolutionary journalist (*Histoire du Peuple Israel*, II.). Journalist indeed! How all this would-be cosmopolitan and impartial critic's judgments smack of the boulevards!

[4] Exod. xx.; incorporated in the JE book of history, and, according to nearly all critics, complete by 750; the contents must have been familiar in Israel long before that. There is no trace in Amos of any influence peculiar to either the Deuteronomic or the Levitical legislation.

[5] See especially Schultz, *O. T. Theol.*, Eng. Trans. by Paterson, I. 214

Nor does Amos go elsewhere for the religious sanctions of his ethics. It is by the ancient mercies of God towards Israel that he shames and convicts his generation—by the deeds of grace which made them a nation, by the organs of doctrine and reproof which have inspired them, unfailing from age to age. *I destroyed the Amorite before them. . . . Yea, I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Was it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah.*[1] We cannot even say that the belief which Amos expresses in Jehovah as the supreme Providence of the world[2] was a new thing in Israel, for a belief as universal inspires those portions of the Book of Genesis which, like the Book of the Covenant, were already extant.

We see, therefore, what right Amos had to present his ethical truths to Israel, as if they were not new, but had been within reach of his people from of old.

We could not, however, commit a greater mistake, than to confine the inspiration of our prophet to the past, and interpret his doctrines as mere inferences from the earlier religious ideas of Israel—inferences forced by his own passionate logic, or more naturally ripened for him by the progress of events. A recent writer has thus summarised the work of the prophets of the eighth century: "In fact they laid hold upon that bias towards the ethical, which dwelt in Jahwism from Moses onwards, and they allowed it alone to have

[1] ii. 9-11. On this passage see further p. 137.

[2] If iv. 13, v. 8 and ix. 6 be genuine, this remark equally applies to belief in Jehovah as Creator.

value as corresponding to the true religion of Jehovah."[1] But this is too abstract to be an adequate statement of the prophets' own consciousness. What overcame Amos was a Personal Influence—the Impression of a Character; and it was this not only as it was revealed in the past of his people. The God who stands behind Amos is indeed the ancient Deity of Israel, and the facts which prove Him God are those which made the nation—the Exodus, the guidance through the wilderness, the overthrow of the Amorites, the gift of the land. *Was it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?* But what beats and burns through the pages of Amos is not the memory of those wonderful works, so much as a fresh vision and understanding of the Living God who worked them. Amos has himself met with Jehovah on the conditions of his own time—on the moral situation provided by the living generation of Israel. By an intercourse conducted, not through the distant signals of the past, but here and now, through the events of the prophet's own day, Amos has received an original and overpowering conviction of his people's God as absolute righteousness. What prophecy had hitherto felt in part, and applied to one or other of the departments of Israel's life, Amos is the first to feel in its fulness, and to every extreme of its consequences upon the worship, the conduct and the fortunes of the nation. To him Jehovah not only commands this and that righteous law, but Jehovah and righteousness are absolutely identical. *Seek Jehovah and ye shall live . . . seek good and ye shall live.*[2] The absoluteness with which Amos conceived this principle, the courage with which he

[1] Kayser, *Old Testament Theology.*

[2] v. 6, 14.

applied it, carry him along those two great lines upon which we most clearly trace his originality as a prophet. In the strength of this principle he does what is really new in Israel: he discards the two elements which had hitherto existed alongside the ethical, and had fettered and warped it.

Up till now the ethical spirit of the religion of Jehovah[1] had to struggle with two beliefs which we can trace back to the Semitic origins of the religion—the belief, namely, that, as the national God, Jehovah would always defend their political interests, irrespective of morality; and the belief that a ceremonial of rites and sacrifices was indispensable to religion. These principles were mutual: as the deity was bound to succour the people, so were the people bound to supply the deity with gifts, and the more of these they brought the more they made sure of his favours. Such views were not absolutely devoid of moral benefit. In the formative period of the nation they had contributed both discipline and hope. But of late they had between them engrossed men's hearts, and crushed out of religion both conscience and common-sense. By the first of them, the belief in Jehovah's predestined protection of Israel, the people's eyes were so holden they could not see how threatening were the times; by the other, the confidence in ceremonial, conscience was dulled, and that immorality permitted which they mingled so shamelessly with their religious zeal. Now the conscience of Amos did not merely protest against the predominance of the two, but was so exclusive, so spiritual, that it boldly banished both from religion. Amos denied that Jehovah was bound to save His people;

[1] See above, p. 18.

he affirmed that ritual and sacrifice were no part of the service He demands from men. This is the measure of originality in our prophet. The two religious principles which were inherent in the very fibre of Semitic religion, and which till now had gone unchallenged in Israel, Amos cast forth from religion in the name of a pure and absolute righteousness. On the one hand, Jehovah's peculiar connection with Israel meant no more than jealousy for their holiness: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*[1] And, on the other hand, all their ceremonial was abhorrent to Him: *I hate, I despise your festivals. . . . Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them. . . . Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; I will not hear the music of thy viols. But let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a perennial stream.*[2]

It has just been said that emphasis upon morality as the sum of religion, to the exclusion of sacrifice, is the most original element in the prophecies of Amos. He himself, however, does not regard this as proclaimed for the first time in Israel, and the precedent he quotes is so illustrative of the sources of his inspiration that we do well to look at it for a little. In the verse next to the one last quoted he reports these words of God: *Did ye offer unto Me sacrifices and gifts in the wilderness, for forty years, O house of Israel?* An extraordinary challenge! From the present blind routine of sacrifice Jehovah appeals to the beginning of His relations with the nation: did they then perform such services to Him? Of course, a negative answer is expected. No other agrees with the main contention of the passage.

[1] iii. 2. [2] v. 21 ff.

In the wilderness Israel had not offered sacrifices and gifts to Jehovah. Jeremiah quotes a still more explicit word of Jehovah: *I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people.*[1]

To these Divine statements we shall not be able to do justice if we hold by the traditional view that the Levitical legislation was proclaimed in the wilderness. Discount that legislation, and the statements become clear. It is true, of course, that Israel must have had a ritual of some kind from the first; and that both in the wilderness and in Canaan their spiritual leaders must have performed sacrifices as if these were acceptable to Jehovah. But even so the Divine words which Amos and Jeremiah quote are historically correct; for while the ethical contents of the religion of Jehovah were its original and essential contents—*I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice*—the ritual was but a modification of the ritual common to all Semites; and ever since the occupation of the land, it had, through the infection of the Canaanite rites on the high places, grown more and more Pagan, both in its functions and in the ideas which these were supposed to express.[2] Amos was right. Sacrifice had never been the Divine, the revealed element in the religion of Jehovah. Nevertheless, before Amos no prophet in Israel appears to have said so. And what enabled this man in the eighth century to offer testimony, so novel but so true, about the far-away beginnings of his people's religion in the fourteenth, was

[1] Jer. vii. 22 f.

[2] See above, p. 23.

plainly neither tradition nor historical research, but an overwhelming conviction of the spiritual and moral character of God—of Him who had been Israel's God both then and now, and whose righteousness had been, just as much then as now, exalted above all purely national interests and all susceptibility to ritual. When we thus see the prophet's knowledge of the Living God enabling him, not only to proclaim an ideal of religion more spiritual than Israel had yet dreamed, but to perceive that such an ideal had been the essence of the religion of Jehovah from the first, we understand how thoroughly Amos was mastered by that knowledge. If we need any further proof of his "possession" by the character of God, we find it in those phrases in which his own consciousness disappears, and we have no longer the herald's report of the Lord's words, but the very accents of the Lord Himself, fraught with personal feeling of the most intense quality. *I* Jehovah *hate, I despise your feast days. . . . Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; I will not hear the music of thy viols.*[1] *. . . I abhor the arrogance of Jacob, and hate his palaces.*[2] *. . . The eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom.*[3] *. . . Jehovah sweareth, I will never forget any of their works.*[4] Such sentences reveal a Deity who is not only manifest Character, but surgent and importunate Feeling. We have traced the prophet's word to its ultimate source. It springs from the righteousness, the vigilance, the urgency of the Eternal. The intellect, imagination and heart of Amos—the convictions he has inherited from his people's past, his conscience of their evil life to-day, his impressions of current and coming history—

[1] v. 21-23. [2] vi. 8. [3] ix. 8. [4] viii. 7.

are all enforced and illuminated, all made impetuous and radiant, by the Spirit, that is to say the Purpose and the Energy, of the Living God. Therefore, as he says in the title of his book, or as some one says for him, Amos *saw* his words. They stood out objective to himself. And they were not mere sound. They glowed and burned with God.

When we realise this, we feel how inadequate it is to express prophecy in the terms of evolution. No doubt, as we have seen, the ethics and religion of Amos represent a large and measurable advance upon those of earlier Israel. And yet with Amos we do not seem so much to have arrived at a new stage in a Process, as to have penetrated to the Idea which has been behind the Process from the beginning. The change and growth of Israel's religion are realities—their fruits can be seen, defined, catalogued—but a greater reality is the unseen Purpose which impels them. They have been expressed only now. He has been unchanging from old and for ever—from the first absolute righteousness in Himself, and absolute righteousness in His demands from men.

3. The Prophet and his Ministry.

Amos vii., viii. 1-4.

We have seen the preparation of the Man for the Word; we have sought to trace to its source the Word which came to the Man. It now remains for us to follow the Prophet, Man and Word combined, upon his Ministry to the people.

For reasons given in a previous chapter,[1] there must

[1] Chap. V., p. 71.

always be some doubt as to the actual course of the ministry of Amos before his appearance at Bethel. Most authorities, however, agree that the visions recounted in the beginning of the seventh chapter form the substance of his address at Bethel, which was interrupted by the priest Amaziah. These visions furnish a probable summary of the prophet's experience up to that point. While they follow the same course, which we trace in the two series of oracles that now precede them in the book, the ideas in them are less elaborate. At the same time it is evident that Amos must have already spoken upon other points than those which he puts into the first three visions. For instance, Amaziah reports to the king that Amos had explicitly predicted the exile of the whole people[1]—a conviction which, as we have seen, the prophet reached only after some length of experience. It is equally certain that Amos must have already exposed the sins of the people in the light of the Divine righteousness. Some of the sections of the book which deal with this subject appear to have been originally spoken; and it is unnatural to suppose that the prophet announced the chastisements of God without having previously justified these to the consciences of men.

If this view be correct, Amos, having preached for some time to Israel concerning the evil state of society, appeared at a great religious festival in Bethel, determined to bring matters to a crisis, and to announce the doom which his preaching threatened and the people's continued impenitence made inevitable. Mark his choice of place and of audience. It was no mere king he aimed at. Nathan had dealt with David,

[1] vii. 11.

Gad with Solomon, Elijah with Ahab and Jezebel. But Amos sought the people, them with whom resided the real forces and responsibilities of life: the wealth, the social fashions, the treatment of the poor, the spirit of worship, the ideals of religion.[1] And Amos sought the people upon what was not only a great popular occasion, but one on which was arrayed, in all pomp and lavishness, the very system he essayed to overthrow. The religion of his time—religion as mere ritual and sacrifice—was what God had sent him to beat down, and he faced it at its headquarters, and upon one of its high days, in the royal and popular sanctuary where it enjoyed at once the patronage of the crown, the lavish gifts of the rich and the thronged devotion of the multitude. As Savonarola at the Duomo in Florence, as Luther at the Diet of Worms, as our Lord Himself at the feast in Jerusalem, so was Amos at the feast in Bethel. Perhaps he was still more lonely. He speaks nowhere of having made a disciple, and in the sea of faces which turned on him when he spoke, it is probable that he could not welcome a single ally. They were officials, or interested traders, or devotees; he was a foreigner and a wild man, with a word that spared the popular dogma as little as the royal prerogative. Well for him was it that over all those serried ranks of authority, those fanatic crowds, that lavish splendour, another vision commanded his eyes. *I saw the Lord standing over the altar, and He said, Smite.*

Amos told the pilgrims at Bethel that the first events of his time in which he felt a purpose of God in

[2] On the ministry of eighth-century prophets to the people see the author's *Isaiah*, I., p. 119.

harmony with his convictions about Israel's need of punishment were certain calamities of a physical kind. Of these, which in chapter iv. he describes as successively drought, blasting, locusts, pestilence and earthquake, he selected at Bethel only two—locusts and drought—and he began with the locusts. It may have been either the same visitation as he specifies in chapter iv., or a previous one; for of all the plagues of Palestine locusts have been the most frequent, occurring every six or seven years. *Thus the Lord Jehovah caused me to see: and, behold, a brood*[1] *of locusts at the beginning of the coming up of the spring crops.* In the Syrian year there are practically two tides of verdure: one which starts after the early rains of October and continues through the winter, checked by the cold; and one which comes away with greater force under the influence of the latter rains and more genial airs of spring.[2] Of these it was the later and richer which the locusts had attacked. *And, behold, it was after the king's mowings.* These seem to have been a tribute which the kings of Israel levied on the spring herbage, and which the Roman governors of Syria used annually to impose in the month Nisan.[3] *After the king's mowings* would be a phrase to mark the time when everybody else might turn to reap their green

[1] So LXX., followed by Hitzig and Wellhausen, by reading יֶצֶר for יוֹצֵר.

[2] Cf. *Hist. Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 64 ff. The word translated *spring crop* above is לֶקֶשׁ, and from the same root as the name of the latter rain, מַלְקוֹשׁ, which falls in the end of March or beginning of April. Cf. *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, IV. 83; VIII. 62.

[3] Cf. 1 Kings xviii. 5 with 1 Sam. vii. 15, 17; 1 Kings iv. 7 ff. See Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 228.

stuff. It was thus the very crisis of the year when the locusts appeared; the April crops devoured, there was no hope of further fodder till December. Still, the calamity had happened before, and had been survived; a nation so vigorous and wealthy as Israel was under Jeroboam II. need not have been frightened to death. But Amos felt it with a conscience. To him it was the beginning of that destruction of his people which the spirit within him knew that their sin had earned. So *it came to pass, when* the locusts *had made an end of devouring the verdure of the earth, that I said, Remit, I pray Thee,* or *pardon*—a proof that there already weighed on the prophet's spirit something more awful than loss of grass—*how shall Jacob rise again? for he is little.*[1] The prayer was heard. *Jehovah repented for this: It shall not be, said Jehovah.* The unnameable *it* must be the same as in the frequent phrase of the first chapter: *I will not turn It back*—namely, the final execution of doom on the people's sin. The reserve with which this is mentioned, both while there is still chance for the people to repent and after it has become irrevocable, is very impressive.

The next example which Amos gave at Bethel of his permitted insight into God's purpose was a great drought. *Thus the Lord Jehovah made me to see: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah was calling fire into the quarrel.*[2] There was, then, already a quarrel between Jehovah

[1] LXX.: *Who shall raise up Jacob again?*

[2] So Professor A. B. Davidson. But the grammar might equally well afford the rendering *one calling that the Lord will punish with the fire*, the ל of לריב marking the introduction of indirect speech (cf. Ewald, § 338*a*). But Hitzig for קרא reads קרה (Deut. xxv. 18), to occur, happen. So similarly Wellhausen, *es nahte sich zu strafen mit Feuer der Herr Jahve.* All these renderings yield practically the same meaning.

and His people—another sign that the prophet's moral conviction of Israel's sin preceded the rise of the events in which he recognised its punishment. *And* the fire *devoured the Great Deep, yea, it was about to devour the land.*[1] Severe drought in Palestine might well be described as fire, even when it was not accompanied by the flame and smoke of those forest and prairie fires which Joel describes as its consequences.[2] But to have the full fear of such a drought, we should need to feel beneath us the curious world which the men of those days felt. To them the earth rested in a great deep, from whose stores all her springs and fountains burst. When these failed it meant that the unfathomed floods below were burnt up. But how fierce the flame that could effect this! And how certainly able to devour next the solid land which rested above the deep —the very *Portion*[3] assigned by God to His people. Again Amos interceded: *Lord Jehovah, I pray Thee forbear: how shall Jacob rise? for he is little.* And for the second time Jacob was reprieved. *Jehovah repented for this: It also shall not come to pass, said the Lord Jehovah.*

We have treated these visions, not as the imagination or prospect of possible disasters,[4] but as insight into the meaning of actual plagues. Such a treatment is

[1] A. B. Davidson, *Syntax*, § 57, Rem. 1. [2] i. 19 f.

[3] Cf. Micah ii. 3. חֵלֶק is the word used, and according to the motive given above stands well for the climax of the fire's destructive work. This meets the objection of Wellhausen, who proposes to omit חֵלֶק, because the heat does not dry up first the great deep and then the fields (*Ackerflur*). This is to mistake the obvious point of the sentence. The drought was so great that, after the fountains were exhausted, it seemed as if the solid framework of the land, described with very apt pathos as the *Portion*, would be the next to disappear. Some take חלק as *divided*, therefore cultivated, ground.

[4] So for instance, Von Orelli.

justified, not only by the invariable habit of Amos to deal with real facts, but also by the occurrence of these same plagues among the series by which, as we are told, God had already sought to move the people to repentance.[1] The general question of sympathy between such purely physical disasters and the moral evil of a people we may postpone to another chapter, confining ourselves here to the part played in the events by the prophet himself.

Surely there is something wonderful in the attitude of this shepherd to the fires and plagues that Nature sweeps upon his land. He is ready for them. And he is ready not only by the general feeling of his time that such things happen of the wrath of God. His sovereign and predictive conscience recognises them as her ministers. They are sent to punish a people whom she has already condemned. Yet, unlike Elijah, Amos does not summon the drought, nor even welcome its arrival. How far has prophecy travelled since the violent Tishbite! With all his conscience of Israel's sin, Amos yet prays that their doom may be turned. We have here some evidence of the struggle through which these later prophets passed, before they accepted their awful messages to men. Even Amos, desert-bred and living aloof from Israel, shrank from the judgment which it was his call to publish. For two moments—they would appear to be the only two in his ministry—his heart contended with his conscience, and twice he entreated God to forgive. At Bethel he told the people all this, in order to show how unwillingly he took up his duty against them, and how inevitable he found that duty to be. But still more shall we learn from his tale, if we feel in his words about the smallness of

[1] Chap. iv.

Jacob, not pity only, but sympathy. We shall learn that prophets are never made solely by the bare word of God, but that even the most objective and judicial of them has to earn his title to proclaim judgment by suffering with men the agony of the judgment he proclaims. Never to a people came there a true prophet who had not first prayed for them. To have entreated for men, to have represented them in the highest courts of Being, is to have deserved also supreme judicial rights upon them. And thus it is that our Judge at the Last Day shall be none other than our great Advocate who continually maketh intercession for us. It is prayer, let us repeat, which, while it gives us all power with God, endows us at the same time with moral rights over men. Upon his mission of judgment we shall follow Amos with the greater sympathy that he thus comes forth to it from the mercy-seat and the ministry of intercession.

The first two visions which Amos told at Bethel were of disasters in the sphere of nature, but his third lay in the sphere of politics. The two former were, in their completeness at least, averted; and the language Amos used of them seems to imply that he had not even then faced the possibility of a final overthrow. He took for granted *Jacob* was *to rise again*: he only feared as to *how* this should be. But the third vision is so final that the prophet does not even try to intercede. Israel is measured, found wanting and doomed. Assyria is not named, but is obviously intended; and the fact that the prophet arrives at certainty with regard to the doom of Israel, just when he thus comes within sight of Assyria, is instructive as to the influence exerted on prophecy by the rise of that empire.[1]

[1] See Chap. IV., p. 51.

Thus He gave me to see: and, behold, the Lord had taken His station—'tis a more solemn word than the *stood* of our versions—*upon a city wall* built to *the plummet*,[1] *and in His hand a plummet. And Jehovah said unto me, What art thou seeing, Amos?* The question surely betrays some astonishment shown by the prophet at the vision or some difficulty he felt in making it out. He evidently does not feel it at once, as the natural result of his own thinking: it is objective and strange to him; he needs time to see into it. *And I said, A plummet. And the Lord said, Behold, I am setting a plummet in the midst of My people Israel. I will not again pass them over.* To set a measuring line or a line with weights attached to any building means to devote it to destruction;[2] but here it is uncertain whether the plummet threatens destruction, or means that Jehovah will at last clearly prove to the prophet the insufferable obliquity of the fabric of the nation's life, originally set straight by Himself—originally *a wall of a plummet.* For God's judgments are never arbitrary: by a standard we men can read He shows us their necessity. Conscience itself is no mere voice of authority: it is a convincing plummet, and plainly lets us see *why* we should be punished. But whichever interpretation we choose, the result is the same. *The high places of Israel shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Isaac laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.* A declaration of war! Israel is to be

[1] Literally *of the plummet*, an obscure expression. It cannot mean plumb-straight, for the wall is condemned.

[2] 2 Kings xxi. 13: *I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet* or *weight* (מִשְׁקֶלֶת) *of the house of Ahab.* Isa. xxxiv. 11: *He shall stretch over it the cord of confusion, and the weights* (literally *stones*) *of emptiness.*

invaded, her dynasty overthrown. Every one who heard the prophet would know, though he named them not, that the Assyrians were meant.

It was apparently at this point that Amos was interrupted by Amaziah. The priest, who was conscious of no spiritual power with which to oppose the prophet, gladly grasped the opportunity afforded him by the mention of the king, and fell back on the invariable resource of a barren and envious sacerdotalism: *He speaketh against Cæsar.*[1] There follows one of the great scenes of history—the scene which, however fast the ages and the languages, the ideals and the deities may change, repeats itself with the same two actors. Priest and Man face each other—Priest with King behind, Man with God—and wage that debate in which the whole warfare and progress of religion consist. But the story is only typical by being real. Many subtle traits of human nature prove that we have here an exact narrative of fact. Take Amaziah's report to Jeroboam. He gives to the words of the prophet just that exaggeration and innuendo which betray the wily courtier, who knows how to accentuate a general denunciation till it feels like a personal attack. And yet, like every Caiaphas of his tribe, the priest in his exaggerations expresses a deeper meaning than he is conscious of. *Amos*—note how the mere mention of the name without description proves that the prophet was already known in Israel, perhaps was one on whom the authorities had long kept their eye—*Amos hath conspired against thee*—yet God was his only fellow-conspirator! —*in the midst of the house of Israel*—this royal tempel at Bethel. *The land is not able to hold his words*—it

[1] John xix. 12.

must burst; yes, but in another sense than thou meanest, O Caiaphas-Amaziah! *For thus hath Amos said, By the sword shall Jeroboam die*—Amos had spoken only of the dynasty, but the twist which Amaziah lends to the words is calculated—*and Israel going shall go into captivity from off his own land.* This was the one unvarnished spot in the report.

Having fortified himself, as little men will do, by his duty to the powers that be, Amaziah dares to turn upon the prophet; and he does so, it is amusing to observe, with that tone of intellectual and moral superiority which it is extraordinary to see some men derive from a merely official station or touch with royalty. *Visionary,*[1] *begone! Get thee off to the land of Judah; and earn*[2] *thy bread there, and there play the prophet. But at Bethel*—mark the rising accent of the voice—*thou shalt not again prophesy. The King's Sanctuary it is, and the House of the Kingdom.*[3] With the official mind this is more conclusive than that it is the House of God! In fact the speech of Amaziah justifies the hardest terms which Amos uses of the religion of his day. In all this priest says there is no trace of the spiritual—only fear, pride and privilege. Divine truth is challenged by human law, and the Word of God silenced in the name of the king.

We have here a conception of religion, which is not merely due to the unspiritual character of the priest who utters it, but has its roots in the far back origins of Israel's religion. The Pagan Semite identified abso-

[1] The word *seer* is here used in a contemptuous sense, and has therefore to be translated by some such word as *visionary.*

[2] Literally *eat.*

[3] בֵּית מַמְלָכָה—that is, a *central* or *capital sanctuary.* Cf. עִיר הַמַּמְלָכָה (1 Sam. xxvii. 5), *city of the kingdom, i.e.* chief or capital town.

lutely State and Church; and on that identification was based the religious practice of early Israel. It had many healthy results: it kept religion in touch with public life; order, justice, patriotism, self-sacrifice for the common weal, were devoutly held to be matters of religion. So long, therefore, as the system was inspired by truly spiritual ideals, nothing for those times could be better. But we see in it an almost inevitable tendency to harden to the sheerest officialism. That it was more apt to do so in Israel than in Judah, is intelligible from the political origin of the Northern Schism, and the erection of the national sanctuaries from motives of mere statecraft.[1] Erastianism could hardly be more flagrant or more ludicrous in its opposition to true religion than at Bethel. And yet how often have the ludicrousness and the flagrancy been repeated, with far less temptation! Ever since Christianity became a state religion, she that needed least to use the weapons of this world has done so again and again in a thoroughly Pagan fashion. The attempts of Churches by law established, to stamp out by law all religious dissent; or where such attempts were no longer possible, the charges now of fanaticism and now of sordidness and religious shopkeeping, which have been so frequently made against dissent by little men who fancied their state connection, or their higher social position, to mean an intellectual and moral superiority; the absurd claims which many a minister of religion makes upon the homes and the souls of a parish, by virtue not of his calling in Christ, but of his position as official priest of the parish,—all these are the sins of Amaziah, priest of Bethel. But they are not

[1] 1 Kings xii. 26, 27.

confined to an established Church. The Amaziahs of dissent are also very many. Wherever the official masters the spiritual; wherever mere dogma or tradition is made the standard of preaching; wherever new doctrine is silenced, or programmes of reform condemned, as of late years in Free Churches they have sometimes been, not by spiritual argument, but by the *ipse dixit* of the dogmatist, or by ecclesiastical rule or expediency,—there you have the same spirit. The dissenter who checks the Word of God in the name of some denominational law or dogma is as Erastian as the churchman who would crush it, like Amaziah, by invoking the state. These things in all the Churches are the beggarly rudiments of Paganism; and religious reform is achieved, as it was that day at Bethel, by the abjuring of officialism.

But Amos answered and said unto Amaziah, No prophet I, nor prophet's son. But a herdsman[1] *I, and a dresser of sycomores; and Jehovah took me from behind the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.*

On such words we do not comment; we give them homage. The answer of this shepherd to this priest is no mere claim of personal disinterestedness. It is the protest of a new order of prophecy,[2] the charter of a spiritual religion. As we have seen, the *sons of the prophets* were guilds of men who had taken to prophesying because of certain gifts of temper and natural disposition, and they earned their bread by the

[1] *Prophet* and *prophet's son* are equivalent terms, the latter meaning one of the professional guilds of prophets. There is no need to change herdsman, בוקר, as Wellhausen does, into נוקד, shepherd, the word used in i. 1.

[2] Cf. Wellhausen, *Hist.*, Eng. Ed., § 6: "Amos was the founder and the purest type of a new order of prophecy."

exercise of these. Among such abstract craftsmen Amos will not be reckoned. He is a prophet, but not of the kind with which his generation was familiar. An ordinary member of society, he has been suddenly called by Jehovah from his civil occupation for a special purpose and by a call which has not necessarily to do with either gifts or a profession. This was something new, not only in itself, but in its consequences upon the general relations of God to men. What we see in this dialogue at Bethel is, therefore, not merely the triumph of a character, however heroic, but rather a step forward—and that one of the greatest and most indispensable—in the history of religion.

There follows a denunciation of the man who sought to silence this fresh voice of God. *Now therefore hearken to the word of Jehovah thou that sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, nor let drop thy words against the house of Israel; therefore thus saith Jehovah.* . . . Thou hast presumed to say; *Hear what God will say.* Thou hast dared to set thine office and system against His word and purpose. See how they must be swept away. In defiance of its own rules the grammar flings forward to the beginnings of its clauses, each detail of the priest's estate along with the scene of its desecration. *Thy wife in the city—shall play the harlot; and thy sons and thy daughters by the sword—shall fall; and thy land by the measuring rope—shall be divided; and thou in an unclean land—shalt die.* Do not let us blame the prophet for a coarse cruelty in the first of these details. He did not invent it. With all the rest it formed an ordinary consequence of defeat in the warfare of the times—an inevitable item of that general overthrow which, with bitter emphasis, the prophet describes in Amaziah's own

words: *Israel going shall go into captivity from off his own land.*

There is added a vision in line with the three which preceded the priest's interruption. We are therefore justified in supposing that Amos spoke it also on this occasion, and in taking it as the close of his address at Bethel. *Then the Lord Jehovah gave me to see: and, behold, a basket of Ḳaits*, that is, *summer fruit. And He said, What art thou seeing, Amos? And I said, A basket of Ḳaits. And Jehovah said unto me, The Ḳets—the End—has come upon My people Israel. I will not again pass them over.* This does not carry the prospect beyond the third vision, but it stamps its finality, and there is therefore added a vivid realisation of the result. By four disjointed lamentations, *howls* the prophet calls them, we are made to feel the last shocks of the final collapse, and in the utter end an awful silence. *And the songs of the temple shall be changed into howls in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah. Multitude of corpses! In every place! He hath cast out! Hush!*

These then were probably the last words which Amos spoke to Israel. If so, they form a curious echo of what was enforced upon himself, and he may have meant them as such. He was *cast out*; he was *silenced*. They might almost be the verbal repetition of the priest's orders. In any case the silence is appropriate. But Amaziah little knew what power he had given to prophecy the day he forbade it to speak. The gagged prophet began to write; and those accents which, humanly speaking, might have died out with the songs of the temple of Bethel were clothed upon with the immortality of literature. Amos silenced wrote a book—first of prophets to do so—and this is the book we have now to study.

CHAPTER VII

ATROCITIES AND ATROCITIES

Amos i. 3—ii.

LIKE all the prophets of Israel, Amos receives oracles for foreign nations. Unlike them, however, he arranges these oracles not after, but before, his indictment of his own people, and so as to lead up to this. His reason is obvious and characteristic. If his aim be to enforce a religion independent of his people's interests and privileges, how can he better do so than by exhibiting its principles at work outside his people, and then, with the impetus drained from many areas, sweep in upon the vested iniquities of Israel herself? This is the course of the first section of his book—chapters i. and ii. One by one the neighbours of Israel are cited and condemned in the name of Jehovah; one by one they are told they must fall before the still unnamed engine of the Divine Justice. But when Amos has stirred his people's conscience and imagination by his judgment of their neighbours' sins, he turns with the same formula on themselves. Are they morally better? Are they more likely to resist Assyria? With greater detail he shows them worse and their doom the heavier for all their privileges. Thus is achieved an oratorical triumph, by tactics in

harmony with the principles of prophecy and remarkably suited to the tempers of that time.

But Amos achieves another feat, which extends far beyond his own day. The sins he condemns in the heathen are at first sight very different from those which he exposes within Israel. Not only are they sins of foreign relations, of treaty and war, while Israel's are all civic and domestic; but they are what we call the atrocities of Barbarism—wanton war, massacre and sacrilege—while Israel's are rather the sins of Civilisation—the pressure of the rich upon the poor, the bribery of justice, the seduction of the innocent, personal impurity, and other evils of luxury. So great is this difference that a critic more gifted with ingenuity than with insight might plausibly distinguish in the section before us two prophets with two very different views of national sin—a ruder prophet, and of course an earlier, who judged nations only by the flagrant drunkenness of their war, and a more subtle prophet, and of course a later, who exposed the masked corruptions of their religion and their peace. Such a theory would be as false as it would be plausible. For not only is the diversity of the objects of the prophet's judgment explained by this, that Amos had no familiarity with the interior life of other nations, and could only arraign their conduct at those points where it broke into light in their foreign relations, while Israel's civic life he knew to the very core. But Amos had besides a strong and a deliberate aim in placing the sins of civilisation as the climax of a list of the atrocities of barbarism. He would recall what men are always forgetting, that the former are really more cruel and criminal than the latter; that luxury, bribery and intolerance, the oppression of the poor, the corruption

of the innocent and the silencing of the prophet—what Christ calls offences against His little ones—are even more awful atrocities than the wanton horrors of barbarian warfare. If we keep in mind this moral purpose, we shall study with more interest than we could otherwise do the somewhat foreign details of this section. Horrible as the outrages are which Amos describes, they were repeated only yesterday by Turkey: many of the crimes with which he charges Israel blacken the life of Turkey's chief accuser, Great Britain.

In his survey Amos includes all the six states of Palestine that bordered upon Israel, and lay in the way of the advance of Assyria—Aram of Damascus, Philistia, Tyre (for Phœnicia), Edom, Ammon and Moab. They are not arranged in geographical order. The prophet begins with Aram in the north-east, then leaps to Philistia in the south-west, comes north again to Tyre, crosses to the south-east and Edom, leaps Moab to Ammon, and then comes back to Moab. Nor is any other explanation of his order visible. Damascus heads the list, no doubt, because her cruelties had been most felt by Israel, and perhaps too because she lay most open to Assyria. It was also natural to take next to Aram Philistia,[1] as Israel's other greatest foe; and nearest to Philistia lay Tyre. The three south-eastern principalities come together. But there may have been a chronological reason now unknown to us.

The authenticity of the oracles on Tyre, Edom and Judah has been questioned: it will be best to discuss each case as we come to it.

Each of the oracles is introduced by the formula:

[1] As is done in chap. vi. 2, ix. 7.

Thus saith, or *hath said, Jehovah: Because of three crimes of . . . yea, because of four, I will not turn It back.* In harmony with the rest of the book,[1] Jehovah is represented as moving to punishment, not for a single sin, but for repeated and cumulative guilt. The unnamed *It* which God will not recall is not the word of judgment, but the anger and the hand stretched forth to smite.[2] After the formula, an instance of the nation's guilt is given, and then in almost identical terms he decrees the destruction of all by war and captivity. Assyria is not mentioned, but it is the Assyrian fashion of dealing with conquered states which is described. Except in the case of Tyre and Edom, the oracles conclude as they have begun, by asserting themselves to be the *word of Jehovah*, or of *Jehovah the Lord.* It is no abstract righteousness which condemns these foreign peoples, but the God of Israel, and their evil deeds are described by the characteristic Hebrew word for sin—*crimes*, *revolts* or *treasons* against Him.[3]

1. Aram of Damascus.—*Thus hath Jehovah said: Because of three crimes of Damascus, yea, because of four, I will not turn It back; for that they threshed Gilead with iron*—or *basalt threshing-sledges.* The word is *iron*, but the Arabs of to-day call basalt iron; and the threshing-sledges, curved slabs[4] drawn rapidly by horses over the heaped corn, are studded with sharp basalt teeth that not only thresh out the grain, but chop the straw into little pieces. So cruelly had Gilead been chopped by Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad some fifty

[1] So against Israel in chap. iv.

[2] So Isa. v. 25: לא שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה Cf. Ezek. xx. 22: והשיבותי את ידי

[3] פשעים

[4] Called *lûḥ*, *i.e.* slab.

or forty years before Amos prophesied.[1] Strongholds were burned, soldiers slain without quarter, children dashed to pieces, and women with child put to a most atrocious end.[2] But *I shall send fire on the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad*—these names are chosen, not because they were typical of the Damascus dynasty, but because they were the very names of the two heaviest oppressors of Israel.[3] *And I will break the bolt*[4] *of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from Biḳʿath-Aven*—the Valley of Idolatry, so called, perhaps, by a play upon Biḳʿath On,[5] presumably the valley between the Lebanons, still called the Beḳʿa, in which lay Heliopolis[6]—*and him that holdeth the sceptre from Beth-Eden*—some royal Paradise in that region of Damascus, which is still the Paradise of the Arab world—*and the people of Aram shall go captive to Ḳir*—Kir in the unknown north, from which they had come:[7] *Jehovah hath said* it.

2. Philistia.—*Thus saith Jehovah: For three crimes of Gaza and for four I will not turn It back, because they led captive a whole captivity, in order to deliver them up to Edom.* It is difficult to see what this means if not the wholesale depopulation of a district in contrast to the enslavement of a few captives of war. By all tribes

[1] These Syrian campaigns in Gilead must have taken place between 839 and 806, the long interval during which Damascus enjoyed freedom from Assyrian invasion.

[2] 2 Kings viii. 12; xiii. 7: cf. above, p. 31.

[3] *He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Aram, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, continually* (2 Kings xiii. 3).

[4] No need here to render *prince*, as some do.

[5] So the LXX.

[6] The present Baalbek (Baal of the Beḳʿa ?). Wellhausen throws doubt on the idea that Heliopolis was at this time an Aramean town.

[7] ix. 7.

of the ancient world, the captives of their bow and spear were regarded as legitimate property: it was no offence to the public conscience that they should be sold into slavery. But the Philistines seem, without excuse of war, to have descended upon certain districts and swept the whole of the population before them, for purely commercial purposes. It was professional slave-catching. The Philistines were exactly like the Arabs of to-day in Africa—not warriors who win their captives in honourable fight, but slave-traders, pure and simple. In warfare in Arabia itself it is still a matter of conscience with the wildest nomads not to extinguish a hostile tribe, however bitter one be against them.[1] Gaza is chiefly blamed by Amos, for she was the emporium of the trade on the border of the desert, with roads and regular caravans to Petra and Elah on the Gulf of Akaba, both of them places in Edom and depots for the traffic with Arabia.[2] *But I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and the holder of the sceptre from Askalon, and I will turn My hand upon Ekron*—four of the five great Philistine towns, Gath being already destroyed, and never again to be mentioned with the others[3]—*and the last of the Philistines shall perish: Jehovah hath said it.*

3. TYRE.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes*

[1] Doughty: *Arabia Deserta*, I. 335.

[2] On the close connection of Edom and Gaza see *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 182 ff.

[3] See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 194 ff. Wellhausen thinks Gath was not yet destroyed, and quotes vi. 2; Micah i. 10, 14. But we know that Hazael destroyed it, and that fact, taken in conjunction with its being the only omission here from the five Philistine towns, is evidence enough. In the passages quoted by Wellhausen there is nothing to the contrary: vi. 2 implies that Gath has fallen; Micah i. 10 is the repetition of an old proverb.

of Tyre and because of four I will not turn It back; for that they gave up a whole captivity to Edom—the same market as in the previous charge—*and did not remember the covenant of brethren.* We do not know to what this refers. The alternatives are three: that the captives were Hebrews and the alliance one between Israel and Edom; that the captives were Hebrews and the alliance one between Israel and Tyre;[1] that the captives were Phœnicians and the alliance the natural brotherhood of Tyre and the other Phœnician towns.[2] But of these three alternatives the first is scarcely possible, for in such a case the blame would have been rather Edom's in buying than Tyre's in selling. The second is possible, for Israel and Tyre had lived in close alliance for more than two centuries; but the phrase *covenant of brethren* is not so well suited to a league between two tribes who felt themselves to belong to fundamentally different races,[3] as to the close kinship of the Phœnician communities. And although, in the scrappy records of Phœnician history before this time, we find no instance of so gross an outrage by Tyre on other Phœnicians, it is quite possible that such may have occurred. During next century Tyre twice over basely took sides with Assyria in suppressing the revolts of her sister cities.[4] Besides, the other Phœnician towns are not included in the charge. We have every reason, therefore, to believe that Amos expresses here not resentment against a

[1] Farrar, 53; Pusey on ver. 9; Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Phönizier*, 298.

[2] To which Wellhausen inclines.

[3] Gen. x.

[4] Under Asarhaddon, 678—676 B.C., and later under Assurbanipal (Pietschmann, *Gesch.*, pp. 302 f.).

betrayal of Israel, but indignation at an outrage upon natural rights and feelings with which Israel's own interests were not in any way concerned. And this also suits the lofty spirit of the whole prophecy. *But I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour her palaces. . . .*

This oracle against Tyre has been suspected by Wellhausen,[1] for the following reasons: that it is of Tyre alone, and silence is kept regarding the other Phœnician cities, while in the case of Philistia other towns than Gaza are condemned; that the charge is the same as against Gaza; and that the usual close to the formula is wanting. But it would have been strange if from a list of states threatened by the Assyrian doom we had missed Tyre, Tyre which lay in the avenger's very path. Again, that so acute a critic as Wellhausen should cite the absence of other Phœnician towns from the charge against Tyre is really amazing, when he has just allowed that it was probably against some or all of these cities that Tyre's crime was committed. How could they be included in the blame of an outrage done upon themselves? The absence of the usual formula at the close may perhaps be explained by omission, as indicated above.[2]

4. EDOM.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Edom and because of four I will not turn It back; for that he pursued with the sword his brother,* who cannot be any other than Israel, *corrupted his natural feelings*—literally *his bowels of mercies*—*and*

[1] And he omits it from his translation.

[2] So far from such an omission proving that the oracle is an insertion, is it not more probable that an insertor would have taken care to make his insertion formally correct?

kept aye fretting[1] *his anger, and his passion he watched*—like a fire, or *paid heed* to it—*for ever.*[2] *But I will send fire upon Teman*—the *South* Region belonging to Edom—*and it shall devour the palaces of Boṣrah*—the Edomite Boṣrah, south-east of Petra.[3] The Assyrians had already compelled Edom to pay tribute.[4]

The objections to the authenticity of this oracle are more serious than those in the case of the oracle on Tyre. It has been remarked[5] that before the Jewish Exile so severe a tone could not have been adopted by a Jew against Edom, who had been mostly under the yoke of Judah, and not leniently treated. What were the facts? Joab subdued Edom for David with great cruelty.[6] Jewish governors were set over the conquered people, and this state of affairs seems to have lasted, in spite of an Edomite attempt against Solomon,[7] till 850. In Jehoshaphat's reign, 873—850, *there was no king of Edom, a deputy was king*, who towards 850 joined the kings of Judah and Israel in an invasion of Moab through his territory.[8] But, soon after this invasion and perhaps in consequence of its failure, Edom revolted from Joram of Judah (849—842),

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[1] There seems no occasion to amend with Olshausen to the *kept* of Psalm ciii. 9.

[2] Read with LXX. שָׁמַר לָנֶצַח, though throughout the verse the LXX. translation is very vile.

[3] In other two passages, Boṣrah, the city, is placed in parallel not to another city, but just as here to a whole region: Isa. xxxiv. 6, where the parallel is the *land of Edom*, and lxiii. 1, where it is *Edom*. There is therefore no need to take Teman in our passage as a city, as which it does not appear before Eusebius.

[4] Under Rimmân-nirari III. (812—783). See Buhl's *Gesch. der Edomiter*, 65: this against Wellhausen.

[5] Wellhausen, *in loco*.

[6] 2 Sam. viii. 13, with 1 Kings xi. 16.

[7] 1 Kings xi. 14-25.

[8] 2 Kings iii.

who unsuccessfully attempted to put down the revolt.[1] The Edomites appear to have remained independent for fifty years at least. Amaziah of Judah (797—779) smote them,[2] but not it would seem into subjection; for, according to the Chronicler, Uzziah had to win back Elath for the Jews after Amaziah's death.[3] The history, therefore, of the relations of Judah and Edom before the time of Amos was of such a kind as to make credible the existence in Judah at that time of the feeling about Edom which inspires this oracle. Edom had shown just the vigilant, implacable hatred here described. But was the right to blame them for it Judah's, who herself had so persistently waged war, with confessed cruelty, against Edom? Could a Judæan prophet be just in blaming Edom and saying nothing of Judah? It is true that in the fifty years of Edom's independence—the period, we must remember, from which Amos seems to draw the materials of all his other charges—there may have been events to justify this oracle as spoken by him; and our ignorance of that period is ample reason why we should pause before rejecting the oracle so dogmatically as Wellhausen does. But we have at least serious grounds for suspecting it. To charge Edom, whom Judah has conquered and treated cruelly, with restless hate towards Judah seems to fall below that high impartial tone which prevails in the other oracles of this section. The charge was much more justifiable at the time of the Exile, when Edom did behave shamefully towards Israel.[4] Wellhausen points out that Teman and Boṣrah are names which do not occur in

[1] 2 Kings viii. 20-22.
[2] 2 Kings xiv. 10.
[3] 2 Chron. xxvi. 2.
[4] See, however, Buhl, *op. cit.*, 67.

the Old Testament before the Exile, but this is uncertain and inconclusive. The oracle wants the concluding formula of the rest.[1]

5. AMMON.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Ammon and because of four I will not turn It back; for that they ripped up Gilead's women with child—in order to enlarge their borders!* For such an end they committed such an atrocity! The crime is one that has been more or less frequent in Semitic warfare. Wellhausen cites several instances in the feuds of Arab tribes about their frontiers. The Turks have been guilty of it in our own day.[2] It is the same charge which the historian of Israel puts into the mouth of Elisha against Hazael of Aram,[3] and probably the war was the same; when Gilead was simultaneously attacked by Arameans from the north and Ammonites from the south. *But I will set fire to the wall of Rabbah*—Rabbath-Ammon, literally *chief* or *capital* of Ammon—*and it shall devour her palaces, with clamour in the day of battle, with tempest in the day of storm.* As we speak of "storming a city," Amos and Isaiah[4] use the tempest to describe the overwhelming invasion of Assyria. There follows the characteristic Assyrian conclusion: *And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes*[5] *together, saith Jehovah.*

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[1] It is, however, no reason against the authenticity of the oracle to say that Edom lay outside the path of Assyria. In answer to that see the Assyrian inscriptions, *e.g.* Asarhaddon's: cf. above, p. 129, *n.* 4.

[2] Notably in the recent Armenian massacres.

[3] 2 Kings viii. 12.

[4] xxviii. 2, xxvii. 7, 8, where the Assyrian and another invasion are both described in terms of tempest.

[5] The LXX. reading, *their priests and their princes*, must be due to taking Malcam = *their king* as Milcom = the Ammonite god. See Jer. xlix. 3.

6. MOAB.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Moab and because of four I will not turn It back; for that he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.*[1] In the great invasion of Moab, about 850, by Israel, Judah and Edom conjointly, the rage of Moab seems to have been directed chiefly against Edom.[2] Whether opportunity to appease that rage occurred on the withdrawal of Israel we cannot say. But either then or afterwards, balked of their attempt to secure the king of Edom alive, Moab wreaked their vengeance on his corpse, and burnt his bones to lime. It was, in the religious belief of all antiquity, a sacrilege; yet it does not seem to have been the desecration of the tomb—or he would have mentioned it—but the wanton meanness of the deed, which Amos felt. *And I will send fire on Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of The-Cities*—Ḳerîoth,[3] perhaps the present Ḳureiyat,[4] on the Moab plateau where Chemosh had his shrine[5]—*and in tumult shall Moab die*—to Jeremiah[6] the Moabites were the sons of tumult—*with clamour and with the noise of the war-trumpet. And I will cut off the ruler*—literally *judge*, probably the vassal king placed by Jeroboam II.—*from her*[7] *midst, and all his*[8] *princes will I slay with him: Jehovah hath said* it.

These, then, are the charges which Amos brings against the heathen neighbours of Israel.

[1] "Great Cæsar dead and turned to clay
Might stop a hole to turn the wind away."

[2] 2 Kings iii. 26. So rightly Pusey.
[3] Jer. xlviii. 24 without article, but in 41 with.
[4] Though this is claimed by most for Ḳiriathaim.
[5] Moabite Stone, l. 13.
[6] xlviii. 45.
[7] The land's.
[8] The king's.

If we look as a whole across the details through which we have been working, what we see is a picture of the Semitic world so summary and so vivid that we get the like of it nowhere else—the Semitic world in its characteristic brokenness and turbulence; its factions and ferocities, its causeless raids and quarrels, tribal disputes about boundaries flaring up into the most terrible massacres, vengeance that wreaks itself alike on the embryo and the corpse—*cutting up women with child in Gilead*, and *burning to lime the bones of the king of Edom*. And the one commerce which binds these ferocious tribes together is the slave-trade in its wholesale and most odious form.

Amos treats none of the atrocities subjectively. It is not because they have been inflicted upon Israel that he feels or condemns them. The appeals of Israel against the tyrant become many as the centuries go on; the later parts of the Old Testament are full of the complaints of God's chosen people, conscious of their mission to the world, against the heathen, who prevented them from it. Here we find none of these complaints, but a strictly objective and judicial indictment of the characteristic crimes of heathen men against each other; and though this is made in the name of Jehovah, it is not in the interests of His people or of any of His purposes through them, but solely by the standard of an impartial righteousness which, as we are soon to hear, must descend in equal judgment on Israel.

Again, for the moral principles which Amos enforces no originality can be claimed. He condemns neither war as a whole nor slavery as a whole, but limits his curse to wanton and deliberate aggravations of them: to the slave-trade in cold blood, in violation of treaties

and for purely commercial ends;[1] to war for trifling causes, and that wreaks itself on pregnant women and dead men; to national hatreds, that never will be still. Now against such things there has always been in mankind a strong conscience, of which the word "humanity" is in itself a sufficient proof. We need not here inquire into the origin of such a common sense—whether it be some native impulse of tenderness which asserts itself as soon as the duties of self-defence are exhausted, or some rational notion of the needlessness of excesses, or whether, in committing these, men are visited by fear of retaliation from the wrath they have unnecessarily exasperated. Certain it is, that warriors of all races have hesitated to be wanton in their war, and have foreboded the special judgment of heaven upon every blind extravagance of hate or cruelty. It is well known how "fey" the Greeks felt the insolence of power and immoderate anger; they are the fatal element in many a Greek tragedy.[2] But the Semites themselves, whose racial ferocity is so notorious, are not without the same feeling. "Even the Beduins' old cruel rancours are often less than the golden piety of the wilderness. The danger past, they can think of the defeated foemen with kindness, . . . putting only their trust in Ullah to obtain the like at need for themselves. It is contrary to the Arabian conscience to extinguish a Kabîla."[3] Similarly in Israel some of the earliest ethical movements were revolts of the public conscience against horrible outrages, like that, for instance,

[1] See above, p. 126.

[2] δυσσεβίας μὲν ὕβρις τέκος (Æschylus, *Eumen.*, 534): cf. *Odyssey*, xiv. 262; xvii. 431.

[3] *I.e.* a tribe; Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, I. 335.

done by the Benjamites of Gibeah.[1] Therefore in these oracles on his wild Semitic neighbours Amos discloses no new ideal for either tribe or individual. Our view is confirmed that he was intent only upon rousing the natural conscience of his Hebrew hearers in order to engage this upon other vices to which it was less impressionable—that he was describing those deeds of war and slavery, whose atrocity all men admitted, only that he might proceed to bring under the same condemnation the civic and domestic sins of Israel.

We turn with him, then, to Israel. But in his book as it now stands in our Bibles, Israel is not immediately reached. Between her and the foreign nations two verses are bestowed upon Judah: *Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Judah and because of four I will not turn It back; for that they despised the Torah of Jehovah, and His statutes they did not observe, and their falsehoods*—false gods—*led them astray, after which their fathers walked. But I will send fire on Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.* These verses have been suspected as a later insertion,[2] on the ground that every reference to Judah in the Book of Amos must be late, that the language is very formal, and that the phrases in which the sin of Judah is described sound like echoes of Deuteronomy. The first of these reasons may be dismissed as absurd; it would have been far more strange if Amos had

[1] Judges xix., xx.

[2] Duhm was the first to publish reasons for rejecting the passage (*Theol. der Propheten*, 1875, p. 119), but Wellhausen had already reached the same conclusion (*Kleine Propheten*, p. 71). Oort and Stade adhere. On the other side see Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, 398, and Kuenen, who adheres to Smith's arguments (*Onderzoek*).

never at all referred to Judah.[1] The charges, however, are not like those which Amos elsewhere makes, and though the phrases may be quite as early as his time,[2] the reader of the original, and even the reader of the English version, is aware of a certain tameness and vagueness of statement, which contrasts remarkably with the usual pungency of the prophet's style. We are forced to suspect the authenticity of these verses.

We ought to pass, then, straight from the third to the sixth verse of this chapter, from the oracles on foreign nations to that on Northern Israel. It is introduced with the same formula as they are: *Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Israel and because of four I will not turn It back.* But there follow a greater number of details, for Amos has come among his own people whom he knows to the heart, and he applies to them a standard more exact and an obligation more heavy than any he could lay to the life of the heathen. Let us run quickly through the items of his charge. *For that they sell an honest man*[3] *for silver, and a needy man for a pair of shoes*—proverbial, as we should say "for an old song"—*who trample to the dust of the earth the head of the poor*—the least improbable rendering of a corrupt passage[4]—*and pervert the way of humble men. And a man and*

[1] "It is plain that Amos could not have excepted Judah from the universal ruin which he saw to threaten the whole land; or at all events such exception would have required to be expressly made on special grounds."—Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, 398.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] צדיק, *righteous*: hardly, as most commentators take it, the *legally* (as distinguished from the *morally*) *righteous*; the rich cruelly used their legal rights to sell respectable and honest members of society into slavery.

[4] By adapting the LXX. So far as we know, Wellhausen is right

his father will go into the maid, the same maid,[1] *to desecrate My Holy Name*—without doubt some public form of unchastity introduced from the Canaanite worship into the very sanctuary of Jehovah, the holy place where He reveals His Name—*and on garments given in pledge they stretch themselves by every altar, and the wine of those who have been fined they drink in the house of their God.* A riot of sin: the material of their revels is the miseries of the poor, its stage the house of God! Such is religion to the Israel of Amos' day —indoors, feverish, sensual. By one of the sudden contrasts he loves, Amos sweeps out of it into God's ideal of religion—a great historical movement, told in the language of the open air: national deliverance, guidance on the highways of the world, the inspiration of prophecy, and the pure, ascetic life. *But I, I destroyed the Amorite*[2] *before you, whose height was as the cedars, and he was strong as oaks, and I destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from below.* What a contrast to the previous picture of the temple filled with fumes of wine and hot with lust! We are out on open history; God's gales blow and the forests crash before them. *And I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you through the wilderness forty years, to inherit the land of the Amorite.* Religion is not chambering and wantonness; it is not selfish

in saying that the Massoretic text, which our English version follows, gives no sense. LXX. reads, also without much sense as a whole, τὰ πατοῦντα ἐπὶ τὸν χοῦν τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἐκονδύλιζον εἰς κεφαλὰς πτωχῶν.

[1] So rightly the LXX. Or the definite article may be here used in conformity with the common Hebrew way of employing it to designate, not a definite individual, but a member of a definite, well-known genus.

[2] On the use of Amorite for all the inhabitants of Canaan see Driver's *Deut.*, pp. 11 f.

comfort or profiting by the miseries of the poor and the sins of the fallen. But religion is history—the freedom of the people and their education, the winning of the land and the defeat of the heathen foe; and then, when the land is firm and the home secure, it is the raising, upon that stage and shelter, of spiritual guides and examples. *And I raised up of your sons to be prophets, and of your young men to be Nazirites*—consecrated and ascetic lives. *Is it not so, O children of Israel? (oracle of Jehovah). But ye made the Nazirites drink wine, and the prophets ye charged, saying, Prophesy not!*

Luxury, then, and a very sensual conception of religion, with all their vicious offspring in the abuse of justice, the oppression of the poor, the corrupting of the innocent, and the intolerance of spiritual forces —these are the sins of an enlightened and civilised people, which Amos describes as worse than all the atrocities of barbarism, and as certain of Divine vengeance. How far beyond his own day are his words still warm! Here in the nineteenth century is Great Britain, destroyer of the slave-traffic, and champion of oppressed nationalities—yet this great and Christian people, at the very time they are abolishing slavery, suffer their own children to work in factories and clay-pits for sixteen hours a day, and in mines set women to a labour for which horses are deemed too valuable. Things improve after 1848, but how slowly and against what callousness of Christians Lord Shaftesbury's long and often disappointed labours painfully testify. Even yet our religious public, that curses the Turk, and in an indignation, which can never be too warm, cries out against the Armenian atrocities, is callous, nay, by the avarice of some, the

haste and passion for enjoyment of many more, and the thoughtlessness of all, itself contributes, to conditions of life and fashions of society, which bear with cruelty upon our poor, taint our literature, needlessly increase the temptations of our large towns, and render pure childlife impossible among masses of our population. Along some of the highways of our Christian civilisation we are just as cruel and just as lustful as Kurd or Turk.

Amos closes this prophecy with a vision of immediate judgment. *Behold, I am about to crush* or *squeeze down upon you, as a waggon crushes*[1] *that is full*

[1] The verb עוק of the Massoretic text is not found elsewhere, and whether we retain it, or take it as a variant of, or mistake for, צוק, or adopt some other reading, the whole phrase is more or less uncertain, and the exact shade of meaning has to be guessed, though the general sense remains pretty much the same. The following is a complete note on the subject, with reasons for adopting the above conclusion.

(1) LXX.: *Behold, I roll* (κυλίω) *under you as a waggon full of straw is rolled.* A.V.: *I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed.* Pusey: *I straiten myself under you, etc.* These versions take עוק in the sense of צוק, *to press*, and תחת in its usual meaning of *beneath*; and the result is conformable to the well-known figure of the Old Testament by which God is said to be laden and weary with the transgressions of His people. But this does not mean an actual descent of judgment, and yet vv. 14-16 imply that such an intimation has been made in ver. 13; and besides מעיק and תעיק are both in the Hiphil, the active, *to press*, or causative, *make to press.* (2) Accordingly some, adopting this sense of the verb, take תחת in an unusual sense of *down upon.* Ewald: *I press down upon you as a cart that is full of sheaves presseth.* Guthe (in Kautzsch's *Bibel*): *Ich will euch quetschen.* Rev. Eng. Ver.: *I will press you in your place.* —But עוק has been taken in other senses. (3) Hoffmann (*Z.A.T.W.*, III. 100) renders it *groan* in conformity with Arab. ʿiḳ. (4) Wetzstein (*ibid.*, 278 ff.) quotes Arab. ʿâḳ, to *stop, hinder*, and suggests *I will bring to a stop.* (5) Buhl (12th Ed. of Gesenius' *Handwört*, sub עוק), in view of possibility of עגלה being threshing-roller, recalls Arab.

of sheaves.[1] An alternative reading supplies the same general impression of a crushing judgment: *I will make the ground quake under you, as a waggon makes it quake*, or *as a waggon* itself *quakes under its load of sheaves.* This shock is to be War. *Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not prove his power, nor the mighty man escape with his life. And he that graspeth the bow shall not stand, nor shall the swift of foot escape, nor the horseman escape with his life. And he that thinketh himself strong among the heroes shall flee away naked in that day—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.*

'akk, *to cut in pieces.* (6) Hitzig (*Exeg. Handbuch*) proposed to read מפיק and תפיק: *I will make it shake under you, as the laden waggon shakes* (the ground). So rather differently Wellhausen: *I will make the ground quake under you, as a waggon quakes under its load of sheaves.*

I have only to add that, in the Alex. Cod. of LXX., which reads κωλύω for κυλίω, we have an interesting analogy to Wetzstein's proposal; and that in support of the rendering of Ewald, and its unusual interpretation of תחתיכם which seems to me on the whole the most probable, we may compare Job xxxvi. 16, לא מוצק תחתיה. This, it is true, suggests rather the choking of a passage than the crushing of the ground; but, by the way, that sense is even more applicable to a harvest waggon laden with sheaves.

[1] *Waggon full of sheaves.*—Wellhausen goes too far when he suggests that Amos would have to go outside Palestine to see such a waggon. That a people who already knew the use of chariots for travelling (cf. Gen. xlvi. 5, JE) and waggons for agricultural purposes (1 Sam. vi. 7 ff.) did not use them at least in the lowlands of their country is extremely improbable. Cf. *Hist. Geog.*, Appendix on *Roads and Wheeled Vehicles in Syria.*

CHAPTER VIII

CIVILISATION AND JUDGMENT

AMOS iii.—iv. 3.

WE now enter the Second Section of the Book of Amos: chaps. iii.—vi. It is a collection of various oracles of denunciation, grouped partly by the recurrence of the formula *Hear this word*, which stands at the head of our present chapters iii., iv. and v., which are therefore probably due to it; partly by two cries of *Woe* at v. 18 and vi. 1; and also by the fact that each of the groups thus started leads up to an emphatic, though not at first detailed, prediction of the nation's doom (iii. 13-15; iv. 3; iv. 12; v. 16, 17; v. 26, 27; vi. 14). Within these divisions lie a number of short indictments, sentences of judgment and the like, which have no further logical connection than is supplied by their general sameness of subject, and a perceptible increase of articulateness from beginning to end of the Section. The sins of Israel are more detailed, and the judgment of war, coming from the North, advances gradually till we discern the unmistakable ranks of Assyria. But there are various parentheses and interruptions, which cause the student of the text no little difficulty. Some of these, however, may be only apparent: it will always be a question whether their want of immediate connection with what

precedes them is not due to the loss of several words from the text rather than to their own intrusion into it. Of others it is true that they are obviously out of place as they lie; their removal brings together verses which evidently belong to each other. Even such parentheses, however, may be from Amos himself. It is only where a verse, besides interrupting the argument, seems to reflect a historical situation later than the prophet's day, that we can be sure it is not his own. And in all this textual criticism we must keep in mind, that the obscurity of the present text of a verse, so far from being an adequate proof of its subsequent insertion, may be the very token of its antiquity, scribes or translators of later date having been unable to understand it. To reject a verse, only because *we* do not see the connection, would surely be as arbitrary, as the opposite habit of those who, missing a connection, invent one, and then exhibit their artificial joint as evidence of the integrity of the whole passage. In fact we must avoid all headstrong surgery, for to a great extent we work in the dark.

The general subject of the Section may be indicated by the title: Religion and Civilisation. A vigorous community, wealthy, cultured and honestly religious, are, at a time of settled peace and growing power, threatened, in the name of the God of justice, with their complete political overthrow. Their civilisation is counted for nothing; their religion, on which they base their confidence, is denounced as false and unavailing. These two subjects are not, and could not have been, separated by the prophet in any one of his oracles. But in the first, the briefest and most summary of these, chaps. iii.—iv. 3, it is mainly with the doom of the civil structure of Israel's life that

Amos deals; and it will be more convenient for us to take them first, with all due reference to the echoes of them in later parts of the Section. From iv. 4—vi. it is the Religion and its false peace which he assaults; and we shall take that in the next chapter. *First*, then, Civilisation and Judgment (iii.—iv. 3); *Second*, The False Peace of Ritual (iv. 4—vi.).

These few brief oracles open upon the same note as that in which the previous Section closed—that the crimes of Israel are greater than those of the heathen; and that the people's peculiar relation to God means, not their security, but their greater judgment. It is then affirmed that Israel's wealth and social life are so sapped by luxury and injustice that the nation must perish. And, as in every luxurious community the women deserve especial blame, the last of the group of oracles is reserved for them (iv. 1-3).

Hear this word, which Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt—Judah as well as North Israel, so that we see the vanity of a criticism which would cast out of the Book of Amos as unauthentic every reference to Judah. *Only you have I known of all the families of the ground*—not world, but *ground*, purposely chosen to stamp the meanness and mortality of them all—*therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*

This famous text has been called by various writers "the keynote," "the licence" and "the charter" of prophecy. But the names are too petty for what is not less than the fulmination of an element. It is a peal of thunder we hear. It is, in a moment, the

explosion and discharge of the full storm of prophecy. As when from a burst cloud the streams immediately below rise suddenly and all their banks are overflowed, so the prophecies that follow surge and rise clear of the old limits of Israel's faith by the unconfined, unmeasured flood of heaven's justice that breaks forth by this single verse. Now, once for all, are submerged the lines of custom and tradition within which the course of religion has hitherto flowed; and, as it were, the surface of the world is altered. It is a crisis which has happened more than once again in history: when helpless man has felt the absolute relentlessness of the moral issues of life; their renunciation of the past, however much they have helped to form it; their sacrifice of every development however costly, and of every hope however pure; their deafness to prayer, their indifference to penitence; when no faith saves a Church, no courage a people, no culture or prestige even the most exalted order of men; but at the bare hands of a judgment, uncouth of voice and often unconscious of a Divine mission, the results of a great civilisation are for its sins swept remorselessly away.

Before the storm bursts, we learn by its lightnings some truths from the old life that is to be destroyed. *You only have I known of all the families of the ground: therefore will I visit your iniquities upon you.* Religion is no insurance against judgment, no mere atonement and escape from consequences. Escape! Religion is only opportunity—the greatest moral opportunity which men have, and which if they violate nothing remains for them but a certain fearful looking forward unto judgment. You only have I known; and because you did not take the moral advantage of My intercourse,

because you felt it only as privilege and pride, pardon for the past and security for the future, therefore doom the more inexorable awaits you.

Then as if the people had interrupted him with the question, What sign do you give us that this judgment is near?—Amos goes aside into that noble digression (vv. 3-8) on the harmony between the prophet's word and the imminent events of the time, which we have already studied.[1] From this apologia, verse 9 returns to the note of verses 1 and 2 and develops it. Not only is Israel's responsibility greater than that of other people's. Her crimes themselves are more heinous. *Make proclamation over the palaces in Ashdod*—if we are not to read Assyria here,[2] then the name of Ashdod has perhaps been selected from all other heathen names because of its similarity to the Hebrew word for that *violence*[3] with which Amos is charging the people—*and over the palaces of the land of Egypt, and say, Gather upon the Mount*[4] *of Samaria and see! Confusions manifold in the midst of her; violence to her very core! Yea, they know not how to do uprightness, saith Jehovah, who store up wrong and violence in their palaces.*

"To their crimes," said the satirist of the Romans, "they owe their gardens, palaces, stables and fine old plate."[5] And William Langland declared of the rich English of his day:—

> "For toke thei on trewly · they tymbred not so heigh,
> Ne boughte non burgages · be ye full certayne."[6]

[1] See above, pp. 82 ff. and pp. 89 ff.

[2] With the LXX. באשור for באשדוד.

[3] שד (ver. 10).

[4] Singular as in LXX., and not plural as in the M.T. and English versions.

[5] Juvenal, *Satires*, I.

[6] *Vision of Piers Plowman.* Burgages = tenements.

Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Siege and Blockade of the Land![1] *And they shall bring down from off thee thy fortresses, and plundered shall be thy palaces.* Yet this shall be no ordinary tide of Eastern war, to ebb like the Syrian as it flowed, and leave the nation to rally on their land again. For Assyria devours the peoples. *Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd saveth from the mouth of the lion a pair of shin-bones or a bit of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be saved—they who sit in Samaria in the corner of the diwan and . . . on a couch.*[2] The description, as will be seen from the note below, is obscure. Some think it is intended to satirise a novel and affected fashion of sitting adopted by the rich. Much more probably it means that carnal security in the luxuries of civilisation which

[1] Or *The Enemy, and that right round the Land!*

[2] *In Damascus on a couch: on a Damascus couch: on a Damascus-cloth couch:* or *Damascus-fashion on a couch*—alternatives all equally probable and equally beyond proof. The text is very difficult, nor do the versions give help. (1) The consonants of the word before *a couch* spell *in Damascus*, and so the LXX. take it. This would be in exact parallel to the *in Samaria* of the previous half of the clause. But although Jeroboam II. is said to have recovered Damascus (2 Kings xiv. 28), this is not necessarily the town itself, of whose occupation by Israel we have no evidence, while Amos always assumes it to be Aramean, and here he is addressing Israelites. Still retaining the name of the city, we can take it with *couch* as parallel, not to *in Samaria*, but to *on the side of a diwan*; in that case the meaning may have been *a Damascus couch* (though as the two words stand it is impossible to parse them, and Gen. xv. 2 cannot be quoted in support of this, for it is too uncertain itself, being possibly a gloss, though it is curious that as the two passages run the name Damascus should be in the same strange grammatical conjunction in each), or possibly *Damascus-fashion on a couch*, which (if the first half of the clause, as some maintain, refers to some delicate or affected posture then come into fashion) is the most probable rendering. (2) The Massoretes have pointed, not *bedammeseq* = *in Damascus*, but *bedemesheq*, a form not found elsewhere, which some (Ges., Hitz., Ew., Rev. Eng.

Amos threatens more than once in similar phrases.[1] The corner of the diwan is in Eastern houses the seat of honour.[2] To this desert shepherd, with only the hard ground to rest on, the couches and ivory-mounted diwans of the rich must have seemed the very symbols of extravagance. But the pampered bodies that loll their lazy lengths upon them shall be left like the crumbs of a lion's meal—*two shin-bones and the bit of an ear!* Their whole civilisation shall perish with them. *Hearken and testify against the house of Israel—oracle of the Lord Jehovah, God of Hosts*[3]—those addressed are still the heathen summoned in ver. 9. *For on the day when I visit the crimes of Israel upon him, I shall then make visitation upon the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar,* which men grasp in their last despair, *shall be smitten and fall to the earth. And I will strike the winter-house upon the summer-house, and the ivory houses shall perish, yea, swept away shall be houses many —oracle of Jehovah.*

But the luxury of no civilisation can be measured

Ver., etc.) take to mean some Damascene stuff (as perhaps our Damask and the Arabic *dimshaq* originally meant, though this is not certain), *e.g. silk* or *velvet* or *cushions.* (3) Others rearrange the text. *E.g.* Hoffmann (*Z.A.T.W.*, III. 102) takes the whole clause away from ver. 12 and attaches it to ver. 13, reading *O those who sit in Samaria on the edge of the diwan, and in Damascus on a couch, hearken and testify against the house of Jacob.* But, as Wellhausen points out, those addressed in ver. 13 are the same as those addressed in ver. 9. Wellhausen prefers to believe that after the words *children of Israel,* which end a sentence, something has fallen out. The LXX. translator, who makes several blunders in the course of this chapter, instead of translating עֶרֶשׂ couch, the last word of the verse, merely transliterates it into *ιερεῖς*!!

[1] Cf. vi. 4: *that lie on ivory diwans and sprawl on their couches.*

[2] Van Lennep, *Bible Lands and Customs*, p. 460.

[3] See p. 205, *n.* 4.

without its women, and to the women of Samaria Amos now turns with the most scornful of all his words. *Hear this word*—this for you—*kine of Bashan that are in the mount of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say to their lords, Bring, and let us drink. Sworn hath the Lord Jehovah by His holiness, lo, days are coming when there shall be a taking away of you with hooks, and of the last of you with fish-hooks.* They put hooks[1] in the nostrils of unruly cattle, and the figure is often applied to human captives;[2] but so many should these cattle of Samaria be that for the *last of them fish-hooks* must be used. *Yea, by the breaches* in the wall of the stormed city *shall ye go out, every one headlong, and ye shall be cast . .*[3] *oracle of Jehovah.* It is a cowherd's rough picture of women: a troop of kine—heavy, heedless animals, trampling in their anxiety for food upon every frail and lowly object in the way. But there is a prophet's insight into character. Not of Jezebels, or Messalinas, or Lady-Macbeths is it spoken, but of the ordinary

[1] The words for hook in Hebrew—the two used above, צִנּוֹת and סִירוֹת, and a third, חוֹחַ—all mean originally *thorns*, doubtless the first hooks of primitive man; but by this time they would signify metal hooks—a change analogous to the English word *pen*.

[2] Cf. Isa. xxxvii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. On the use of fish-hooks, Job xl. 26 (Heb.), xli. 2 (Eng.); Ezek. xxix. 4.

[3] The verb, which in the text is active, must be taken in the passive. The word not translated above is הַהַרְמֹנָה, *unto the Harmôn*, which name does not occur elsewhere. LXX. read εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ Ῥομμάν, which Ewald renders *ye shall cast the Rimmon to the mountain* (cf. Isa. ii. 20), and he takes Rimmon to be the Syrian goddess of love. Steiner (quoted by Wellhausen) renders *ye shall be cast out to Hadad Rimmon*, that is, *violated as* קדשות. Hitzig separates ההר from מונה, which he takes as contracted from מענה, and renders *ye shall fling yourselves out on the mountains as a refuge*. But none of these is satisfactory.

matrons of Samaria. Thoughtlessness and luxury are able to make brutes out of women of gentle nurture, with homes and a religion.[1]

Such are these three or four short oracles of Amos. They are probably among his earliest—the first peremptory challenges of prophecy to that great stronghold which before forty years she is to see thrown down in obedience to her word. As yet, however, there seems to be nothing to justify the menaces of Amos. Fair and stable rises the structure of Israel's life. A nation, who know themselves elect, who in politics are prosperous and in religion proof to every doubt, build high their palaces, see the skies above them unclouded, and bask in their pride, heaven's favourites without a fear. This man, solitary and sudden from his desert, springs upon them in the name of God and their poor. Straighter word never came from Deity: *Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?* The insight of it, the justice of it, are alike convincing. Yet at first it appears as if it were sped on the personal and very human passion of its herald. For Amos not only uses the desert's cruelties—the lion's to the sheep—to figure God's impending judgment upon His people, but he enforces the latter with all a desert-bred man's horror of cities and civilisation. It is their costly furniture, their lavish and complex building, on which he sees the storm break. We seem to hear again that frequent phrase of the previous section: *the fire shall devour the palaces thereof.* The palaces, he says, are

[1] I have already treated this passage in connection with Isaiah's prophecies on women in the volume on Isaiah i.—xxxix. (Expositor's Bible), Chap. XVI.

simply storehouses of oppression; the palaces will be plundered. Here, as throughout his book,[1] couches and diwans draw forth the scorn of a man accustomed to the simple furniture of the tent. But observe his especial hatred of houses. Four times in one verse he smites them: *winter-house on summer-house and the ivory houses shall perish—yea, houses manifold, saith the Lord.* So in another oracle of the same section: *Houses of ashlar ye have built, and ye shall not inhabit them; vineyards of delight have ye planted, and ye shall not drink of their wine.*[2] And in another: *I loathe the pride of Jacob, and his palaces I hate; and I will give up a city and all that is in it. . . . For, lo, the Lord is about to command, and He will smite the great house into ruins and the small house into splinters.*[3] No wonder that such a prophet found war with its breached walls insufficient, and welcomed, as the full ally of his word, the earthquake itself.[4]

Yet all this is no mere desert "razzia" in the name of the Lord, a nomad's hatred of cities and the culture of settled men. It is not a temper; it is a vision of history. In the only argument which these early oracles contain, Amos claims to have events on the side of his word. *Shall the lion roar and not be catching* something? Neither does the prophet speak till he knows that God is ready to act. History accepted this claim. Amos spoke about 755. In 734 Tiglath-Pileser swept Gilead and Galilee; in 724 Shalmaneser overran the rest of Northern Israel: *siege and blockade of the whole land!* For three years the Mount of Samaria was invested, and then taken; the houses overthrown, the rich and the delicate led away captive. It happened

[1] Cf. chap. vi. 4.
[2] v. 11.
[3] vi. 8, 11.
[4] Cf. what was said on building above, p. 33.

as Amos foretold; for it was not the shepherd's rage within him that spoke. He had *seen the Lord standing, and He said, Smite.*

But this assault of a desert nomad upon the structure of a nation's life raises many echoes in history and some questions in our own minds to-day. Again and again have civilisations far more powerful than Israel's been threatened by the desert in the name of God, and in good faith it has been proclaimed by the prophets of Christianity and other religions that God's kingdom cannot come on earth till the wealth, the culture, the civil order, which men have taken centuries to build, have been swept away by some great political convulsion. To-day Christianity herself suffers the same assaults, and is told by many, the high life and honest intention of whom cannot be doubted, that till the civilisation which she has so much helped to create is destroyed, there is no hope for the purity or the progress of the race. And Christianity, too, has doubts within herself. What is the world which our Master refused in the Mount of Temptation, and so often and so sternly told us that it must perish?—how much of our wealth, of our culture, of our politics, of the whole fabric of our society? No thoughtful and religious man, when confronted with civilisation, not in its ideal, but in one of those forms which give it its very name, the life of a large city, can fail to ask, How much of this deserves the judgment of God? How much must be overthrown, before His will is done on earth? All these questions rise in the ears and the heart of a generation, which more than any other has been brought face to face with the ruins of empires and civilisations, which have endured longer, and in their day seemed more stable, than her own.

In face of the confused thinking and fanatic speech which have risen on all such topics, it seems to me that the Hebrew prophets supply us with four cardinal rules.

First, of course, they insist that it is the moral question upon which the fate of a civilisation is decided. By what means has this system grown? Is justice observed in essence as well as form? Is there freedom, or is the prophet silenced? Does luxury or self-denial prevail? Do the rich make life hard for the poor? Is childhood sheltered and is innocence respected? By these, claim the prophets, a nation stands or falls; and history has proved the claim on wider worlds than they dreamt of.

But by themselves moral reasons are never enough to justify a prediction of speedy doom upon any system or society. None of the prophets began to foretell the fall of Israel till they read, with keener eyes than their contemporaries, the signs of it in current history. And this, I take it, was the point which made a notable difference between them, and one who like them scourged the social wrongs of his civilisation, yet never spoke a word of its fall. Juvenal nowhere calls down judgments, except upon individuals. In his time there were no signs of the decline of the empire, even though, as he marks, there was a flight from the capital of the virtue which was to keep the empire alive. But the prophets had political proof of the nearness of God's judgment, and they spoke in the power of its coincidence with the moral corruption of their people.

Again, if conscience and history (both of them, to the prophets, being witnesses of God) thus combine to announce the early doom of a civilisation, neither the religion that may have helped to build it, nor any

remanent virtue in it, nor its ancient value to God, can avail to save. We are tempted to judge that the long and costly development of ages is cruelly thrown away by the convulsion and collapse of an empire; it feels impious to think that the patience, the providence, the millennial discipline of the Almighty are to be in a moment abandoned to some rude and savage force. But we are wrong. *You only have I known of all the families of the ground*, yet I must *visit upon you your iniquities*. Nothing is too costly for justice. And God finds some other way of conserving the real results of the past.

Again, it is a corollary of all this, that the sentence upon civilisation must often seem to come by voices that are insane, and its execution by means that are criminal. Of course, when civilisation is arraigned as a whole, and its overthrow demanded, there may be nothing behind the attack but jealousy or greed, the fanaticism of ignorant men or the madness of disordered lives. But this is not necessarily the case. For God has often in history chosen the outsider as the herald of doom, and sent the barbarian as its instrument. By the statesmen and patriots of Israel, Amos must have been regarded as a mere savage, with a savage's hate of civilisation. But we know what he answered when Amaziah called him rebel. And it was not only for its suddenness that the apostles said the *day of the Lord should come as a thief*, but also because of its methods. For over and over again has doom been pronounced, and pronounced truly, by men who in the eyes of civilisation were criminals and monsters.

Now apply these four principles to the question of ourselves. It will scarcely be denied that our civilisa-

tion tolerates, and in part lives by, the existence of vices which, as we all admit, ruined the ancient empires. Are the political possibilities of overthrow also present? That there exist among us means of new historic convulsions is a thing hard for us to admit. But the signs cannot be hid. When we see the jealousies of the Christian peoples, and their enormous preparations for battle; the arsenals of Europe which a few sparks may blow up; the millions of soldiers one man's word may mobilise; when we imagine the opportunities which a general war would furnish to the discontented masses of the European proletariat,—we must surely acknowledge the existence of forces capable of inflicting calamities, so severe as to affect not merely this nationality or that type of culture, but the very vigour and progress of civilisation herself; and all this without our looking beyond Christendom, or taking into account the rise of the yellow races to a consciousness of their approach to equality with ourselves. If, then, in the eyes of the Divine justice Christendom merits judgment,—if life continue to be left so hard to the poor; if innocence be still an impossibility for so much of the childhood of the Christian nations; if with so many of the leaders of civilisation prurience be lifted to the level of an art, and licentiousness followed as a cult; if we continue to pour the evils of our civilisation upon the barbarian, and "the vices of our young nobles," to paraphrase Juvenal, "are aped in" Hindustan,—then let us know that the means of a judgment more awful than any which has yet scourged a delinquent civilisation are extant and actual among us. And if one should reply, that our Christianity makes all the difference, that God cannot undo the development of nineteen centuries, or cannot over-

throw the peoples of His Son,—let us remember that God does justice at whatever cost; that as He did not spare Israel at the hands of Assyria, so He did not spare Christianity in the East when the barbarians of the desert found her careless and corrupt. *You only have I known of all the families of the ground, therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*

CHAPTER IX

THE FALSE PEACE OF RITUAL

Amos iv. 4—vi.

THE next four groups of oracles[1]—iv. 4-13, v. 1-17, v. 18-27 and vi.—treat of many different details, and each of them has its own emphasis; but all are alike in this, that they vehemently attack the national worship and the sense of political security which it has engendered. Let us at once make clear that this worship is the worship of Jehovah. It is true that it is mixed with idolatry, but, except possibly in one obscure verse,[2] Amos does not concern himself with the idols. What he strikes at, what he would sweep away, is his people's form of devotion to their own God. The cult of the national God, at the national sanctuaries, in the national interest and by the whole body of the people, who practise it with a zeal unparalleled by their forefathers—this is what Amos condemns. And he does so absolutely. He has nothing but scorn for the temples and the feasts. The assiduity of attendance, the liberality of gifts, the employment of wealth and art and patriotism in worship—he tells his generation that God loathes it all. Like Jeremiah, he even seems to imply that God never

[1] See p. 141. [2] v. 26.

instituted in Israel any sacrifice or offering.[1] It is all this which gives these oracles their interest for us ; and that interest is not merely historical.

It is indeed historical to begin with. When we find, not idolatry, but all religious ceremonial—temples, public worship, tithes, sacrifice, the praise of God by music, in fact every material form in which man has ever been wont to express his devotion to God—scorned and condemned with the same uncompromising passion as idolatry itself, we receive a needed lesson in the history of religion. For when one is asked, What is the distinguishing characteristic of heathenism? one is always ready to say, Idolatry, which is not true. The distinguishing characteristic of heathenism is the stress which it lays upon ceremonial. To the pagan religions, both of the ancient and of the modern world, rites were the indispensable element in religion. The gifts of the gods, the abundance of fruits, the security of the state, depended upon the full and accurate performance of ritual. In Greek literature we have innumerable illustrations of this : the *Iliad* itself starts from a god's anger, roused by an insult to his priest, whose prayers for vengeance he hears because sacrifices have been assiduously offered to him. And so too with the systems of paganism from which the faith of Israel, though at first it had so much in common with them, broke away to its supreme religious distinction. The Semites laid the stress of their obedience to the gods upon traditional ceremonies ; and no sin was held so heinous by them as the neglect or infringement of a religious rite. By the side of it offences against one's fellow-men or one's own character were deemed mere mis-

[1] v. 25.

demeanours. In the day of Amos this pagan superstition thoroughly penetrated the religion of Jehovah, and so absorbed the attention of men, that without the indignant and complete repudiation of it prophecy could not have started on her task of identifying morality with religion, and of teaching men more spiritual views of God. But even when we are thus aware of ceremonialism as the characteristic quality of the pagan religions, we have not measured the full reason of that uncompromising attack on it, which is the chief feature of this part of the permanent canon of our religion. For idolatries die everywhere; but everywhere a superstitious ritualism survives. It continues with philosophies that have ceased to believe in the gods who enforced it. Upon ethical movements which have gained their freedom by breaking away from it, in the course of time it makes up, and lays its paralysing weight. With offers of help it flatters religions the most spiritual in theory and intention. The Pharisees, than whom few parties had at first purer ideals of morality, tithed mint, anise and cummin, to the neglect of the essence of the Law; and even sound Christians, who have assimilated the Gospel of St. John, find it hard and sometimes impossible to believe in salvation apart from their own sacraments, or outside their own denominational forms. Now this is because ritual is a thing which appeals both to the baser and to the nobler instincts of man. To the baser it offers itself as a mechanical atonement for sin, and a substitute for all moral and intellectual effort in connection with faith; to the nobler it insists on a man's need in religion of order and routine, of sacrament and picture. Plainly then the words of Amos have significance for more than the immediate problems of his day. And if it

seem to some, that Amos goes too far with his cry to sweep away all ceremonial, let them remember, besides the crisis of his times, that the temper he exposes and seeks to dissipate is a rank and obdurate error of the human heart. Our Lord, who recognised the place of ritual in worship, who said, *Thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness,* which righteousness in the dialect of His day was not the moral law, but man's due of rite, sacrifice, tithe and alms,[1] said also, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* There is an irreducible minimum of rite and routine in worship; there is an invaluable loyalty to traditional habits; there are holy and spiritual uses in symbol and sacrament. But these are all dispensable; and because they are all constantly abused, the voice of the prophet is ever needed which tells us that God will have none of them; but let justice roll on like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

For the superstition that ritual is the indispensable bond between God and man, Amos substitutes two other aspects of religion. They are history as God's discipline of man; and civic justice, as man's duty to God. The first of them he contrasts with religious ceremonialism in chap. iv. 4-13, and the second in chap. v.; while in chap. vi. he assaults once more the false political peace which the ceremonialism engenders.

1. For Worship, Chastisement.

Amos iv. 4-13.

In chap. ii. Amos contrasted the popular conception of religion as worship with God's conception of it as history. He placed a picture of the sanctuary, hot

[1] Another proof of how the spirit of ritualism tends to absorb morality.

with religious zeal, but hot too with passion and the fumes of wine, side by side with a great prospect of the national history: God's guidance of Israel from Egypt onwards. That is, as we said at the time, he placed an indoors picture of religion side by side with an open-air one. He repeats that arrangement here. The religious services he sketches are more pure, and the history he takes from his own day; but the contrast is the same. Again we have on the one side the temple worship—artificial, exaggerated, indoors, smoky; but on the other a few movements of God in Nature, which, though they all be calamities, have a great moral majesty upon them. The first opens with a scornful call to worship, which the prophet, letting out his whole heart at the beginning, shows to be equivalent to sin. Note next the impossible caricature of their exaggerated zeal: sacrifices every morning instead of once a year, tithes every three days instead of every three years.[1] To offer leavened bread was a departure from the older fashion of unleavened.[2] To publish their liberality was like the later Pharisees, who were not dissimilarly mocked by our Lord: *When thou doest alms, cause not a trumpet to be sounded before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.*[3] There is a certain rhythm in the taunt; but the prose style seems to be resumed with fitness when the prophet describes the solemn approach of God in deeds of doom.

[1] Ver. 4: cf. 1 Sam. i.; Deut. xiv. 28. Wellhausen offers another exegesis: Amos is describing exactly what took place at Bethel—sacrifice on the morning, *i.e.* next to the day of their arrival, tithes on the third day thereafter.

[2] See Wellhausen's note, and compare Lev. vii. 13.

[3] Matt. vi. 2.

Come away to Bethel and transgress,
At Gilgal exaggerate your transgression!
And bring every morning your sacrifices,
Every three days your tithes!
And send up the savour of leavened bread as a thank-offering,
And call out your *liberalities—make them to be heard!*
For so ye love to do, *O children of Israel:*
Oracle of Jehovah.

But I on My side have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places—yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

But I on My side withheld from you the winter rain,[1] *while it was still three months to the harvest: and I let it rain repeatedly on one city, and upon one city I did not let it rain: one lot was rained upon, and the lot that was not rained upon withered; and two or three cities kept straggling to one city to drink water, and were not satisfied —yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.*

I smote you with blasting and with mildew: many of your gardens and your vineyards and your figs and your olives the locust devoured—yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

I sent among you a pestilence by way of Egypt:[2] *I slew*

[1] גֶּשֶׁם: *Hist. Geog.*, p. 64. It is interesting that this year (1895) the same thing was threatened, according to a report in the *Mittheilungen u. Nachrichten des D.P.V.*, p. 44: "Nachdem es im December einigemal recht stark geregnet hatte besonders an der Meeresküste ist seit kurz vor Weihnachten das Wetter immer schön u. mild geblieben, u. wenn nicht weiterer Regen fällt, so wird grosser Wassermangel entstehen denn bis jetzt (16 Febr.) hat Niemand Cisterne voll." The harvest is in April-May.

[2] Or in the fashion of Egypt, *i.e.* a thoroughly Egyptian plague; so called, not with reference to the plagues of Egypt, but because that country was always the nursery of the pestilence. See *Hist. Geog.*, p. 157 ff. Note how it comes with war.

with the sword your youths—besides the capture of your horses—and I brought up the stench of your camps to your nostrils—yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

I overturned among you, like God's own overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah, till ye became as a brand plucked from the burning—yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

This recalls a passage in that English poem of which we are again and again reminded by the Book of Amos, *The Vision of Piers Plowman.* It is the sermon of Reason in Passus V. (Skeat's edition):—

"He preved that thise pestilences · were for pure synne,
And the southwest wynde · in saterday et evene
Was pertliche[1] for pure pride · and for no poynt elles.
Piries and plomtrees · were puffed to the erthe,
In ensample ze segges[2] · ze shulden do the bettere.
Beches and brode okes · were blowen to the grounde.
Torned upward her tailles · in tokenynge of drede,
That dedly synne at domesday · shal fordon[3] hem alle."

In the ancient world it was a settled belief that natural calamities like these were the effects of the deity's wrath. When Israel suffers from them the prophets take for granted that they are for the people's punishment. I have elsewhere shown how the climate of Palestine lent itself to these convictions; in this respect the Book of Deuteronomy contrasts it with the climate of Egypt.[4] And although some, perhaps rightly, have scoffed at the exaggerated form of the belief, that God is angry with the sons of men every time drought or floods happen, yet the instinct is sound which in all ages has led religious people to

[1] Apertly, openly.
[2] Men.
[3] Undo.
[4] *Hist, Geog.*, Chap. iii., pp. 73 f.

feel that such things are inflicted for moral purposes. In the economy of the universe there may be ends of a purely physical kind served by such disasters, apart altogether from their meaning to man. But man at least learns from them that nature does not exist solely for feeding, clothing and keeping him wealthy; nor is it anything else than his monotheism, his faith in God as the Lord both of his moral life and of nature, which moves him to believe, as Hebrew prophets taught and as our early English seer heard Reason herself preach. Amos had the more need to explain those disasters as the work of the God of righteousness, because his contemporaries, while willing to grant Jehovah leadership in war, were tempted to attribute to the Canaanite gods of the land all power over the seasons.

What, however, more immediately concerns us in this passage is its very effective contrast between men's treatment of God and God's treatment of men. They lavish upon Him gifts and sacrifices. He—*on His side*—sends them cleanness of teeth, drought, blasting of their fruits, pestilence, war and earthquake. That is to say, they regard Him as a being only to be flattered and fed. He regards them as creatures with characters to discipline, even at the expense of their material welfare. Their views of Him, if religious, are sensuous and gross; His views of them, if austere, are moral and ennobling. All this may be grim, but it is exceeding grand; and short as the efforts of Amos are, we begin to perceive in him something already of the greatness of an Isaiah.

And have not those, who have believed as Amos believed, ever been the strong spirits of our race, making the very disasters which crushed them to the earth the tokens that God has great views about them? Laugh

not at the simple peoples, who have their days of humiliation, and their fast-days after floods and stunted harvests. For they take these, not like other men, as the signs of their frailty and helplessness; but as measures of the greatness God sees in them, His provocation of their souls to the infinite possibilities which He has prepared for them.

Israel, however, did not turn even at the fifth call to penitence, and so there remained nothing for her but a fearful looking forward to judgment, all the more terrible that the prophet does not define what the judgment shall be.

Therefore thus shall I do to thee, O Israel: because I am going to do this to thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth to man what His thought is, that maketh morning darkness, and marcheth on the high places of earth, Jehovah, God of Hosts, is His Name.[1]

2. For Worship, Justice.

Amos v.

In the next of these groups of oracles Amos continues his attack on the national ritual, and now contrasts it with the service of God in public life—the relief of the poor, the discharge of justice. But he does not begin with this. The group opens with an elegy, which bewails the nation as already fallen. It is always difficult to mark where the style of a prophet passes from rhythmical prose into what we may justly call a metrical form. But in this short wail, we catch the well-known measure of the Hebrew dirge; not so

[1] This and similar passages are dealt with by themselves in Chap. XI.

artistic as in later poems, yet with at least the characteristic couplet of a long and a short line.

Hear this word which I lift up against you—a Dirge O house of Israel:—

Fallen, no more shall she rise,
Virgin of Israel!
Flung down on her own ground,
No one to raise her!

The *Virgin*, which with Isaiah is a standing title for Jerusalem and occasionally used of other cities, is here probably the whole nation of Northern Israel. The explanation follows. It is War. *For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: The city that goeth forth a thousand shall have an hundred left; and she that goeth forth an hundred shall have left ten for the house of Israel.*

But judgment is not yet irrevocable. There break forthwith the only two promises which lighten the lowering darkness of the book. Let the people turn to Jehovah Himself—and that means let them turn from the ritual, and instead of it purge their civic life, restore justice in their courts and help the poor. For God and moral good are one. It is *seek Me and ye shall live*, and *seek good and ye shall live.* Omitting for the present all argument as to whether the interruption of praise to the power of Jehovah be from Amos or another, we read the whole oracle as follows.

Thus saith Jehovah to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live. But seek not Bethel, and come not to Gilgal, and to Beersheba pass not over—to come to Beersheba one had to cross all Judah. *For Gilgal shall taste the gall of exile*—it is not possible except in this clumsy way to echo the prophet's play upon words, "Ha-Gilgal galoh yigleh"—*and Bethel*, God's house, *shall become an*

idolatry. This rendering, however, scarcely gives the rude force of the original; for the word rendered idolatry, Aven, means also falsehood and perdition, so that we should not exaggerate the antithesis if we employed a phrase which once was not vulgar: *And Bethel, house of God, shall go to the devil!*[1] The epigram was the more natural that near Bethel, on a site now uncertain, but close to the edge of the desert to which it gave its name, there lay from ancient times a village actually called Beth-Aven, however the form may have risen. And we shall find Hosea stereotyping this epigram of Amos, and calling the sanctuary Beth-Aven oftener than he calls it Beth-El.[2] *Seek ye Jehovah and live,* he begins again, *lest He break forth like fire, O house of Joseph, and it consume and there be none to quench at Bethel.*[3] . . .[4] *He that made the Seven Stars and Orion,*[5]

[1] Cf. LXX.: Βαιθὴλ ἔσται ὡς οὐχ ὑπάρχουσα.

[2] The name Bethel is always printed as one word in our Hebrew texts. See Baer on Gen. xii. 8.

[3] Wellhausen thinks *at Bethel* not genuine. But Bethel has been singled out as the place where the people put their false confidence, and is naturally named here. LXX.: τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραήλ.

[4] Ver. 7 is plainly out of place here, as the LXX. perceived, and therefore tried to give it another rendering which would make it seem in place: ὁ ποιῶν εἰς ὕψος κρίμα, καὶ δικαιοσύνην εἰς γὴν ἔθηκεν. So Ewald removed it to between vv. 9 and 10. There it begins well another oracle; and it may be that we should insert before it הוי, as in vv. 18, vi. 1.

[5] Literally *the Group* and *the Giant.* כימה, Kimah, signifies group, or little heap. Here it is rendered by Aq. and at Job ix. 9 by LXX. Ἀρκτοῦρος; and here by Theod. and in Job xxxviii. 31, *the chain,* or *cluster, of the group* Πλειάδες. The Targ. and Pesh. always give it as Kima, *i.e.* Pleiades. And this is the rendering of most moderns. But Stern takes it for Sirius with its constellation of the Great Dog, for the reason that this is the brightest of all stars, and therefore a more suitable fellow for Orion than the dimmer Pleiades can be. כסיל, the Fool or Giant, is the Hebrew name of Ὠρίων, by

that turneth the murk[1] *into morning, and day He darkeneth to night, that calleth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out on the face of the earth—Jehovah His Name. He it is that flasheth out ruin*[2] *on strength, and bringeth down*[3] *destruction on the fortified.* This rendering of the last verse is uncertain, and rightly suspected, but there is no alternative so probable, and it returns to the keynote from which the passage started, that God should break forth like fire.

Ah, *they that turn justice to wormwood, and abase*[4] *righteousness to the earth! They hate him that reproveth in the gate*—in an Eastern city both the law-court and place of the popular council—*and him that speaketh sincerely they abhor.* So in the English mystic's Vision Peace complains of Wrong:—

"I dar noughte for fere of hym · fyghte ne chyde."[5]

Wherefore, because ye trample on the weak and take from him a present of corn,[6] *ye have built houses of ashlar,*[7] *but ye shall not dwell in them; vineyards for pleasure have ye planted, but ye shall not drink of their wine. For I know how many are your crimes, and how forceful*[8]

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which the LXX. render it. Targum גיפלא. To the ancient world the constellation looked like the figure of a giant fettered in heaven, "a fool so far as he trusted in his bodily strength" (Dillmann). In later times he was called Nimrod. His early setting came at the time of the early rains. Cf. with the passage Job ix. 9 and xxxviii. 31.

[1] The abstract noun meaning *deep shadow*, LXX. σκιά, and rendered *shadow of death* by many modern versions.

[2] So LXX., reading שֹׁבֵר for שֹׁד; it improves the rhythm, and escapes the awkward repetition of שֹׁד.

[3] So LXX.

[4] Possible alternative: *make stagnant.*

[5] *Vision of Piers Plowman*, Passus IV., l. 52. Cf. the whole passage.

[6] Uncertain; Hitzig takes it as the apodosis of the previous clause: *Ye shall have to take from him a present of corn, i.e.* as alms.

[7] See above, p. 33.]

[8] Cf. "Pecca fortiter."

your sins—ye that browbeat the righteous, take bribes, and bring down the poor in the gate! Therefore the prudent in such a time is dumb, for an evil time is it indeed.

Seek good and not evil, that ye may live, and Jehovah God of Hosts be with you, as ye say He is. *Hate evil and love good; and in the gate set justice on her feet again—peradventure Jehovah God of Hosts may have pity on the remnant of Joseph.* If in the Book of Amos there be any passages, which, to say the least, do not now lie in their proper places, this is one of them. For, firstly, while it regards the nation as still responsible for the duties of government, it recognises them as reduced to a remnant. To find such a state of affairs we have to come down to the years subsequent to 734, when Tiglath-Pileser swept into captivity all Gilead and Galilee—that is, two-thirds, in bulk, of the territory of Northern Israel—but left Ephraim untouched. In answer to this, it may, of course, be pointed out that in thus calling the people to repentance, so that a remnant might be saved, Amos may have been contemplating a disaster still future, from which, though it was inevitable, God might be moved to spare a remnant.[1] That is very true. But it does not meet this further difficulty, that the verses (14, 15) plainly make interruption between the end of ver. 13 and the beginning of ver. 16; and that the initial *therefore* of the latter verse, while it has no meaning in its present sequence, becomes natural and appropriate when made to follow immediately on ver. 13. For all these reasons, then, I take vv. 14 and 15 as a parenthesis, whether from Amos himself or from a later writer who can tell? But it ought to be kept in

[1] As, for instance, the prophet looks forward to in iii. 12.

mind that in other prophetic writings where judgment is very severe, we have some proof of the later insertion of calls to repentance, by way of mitigation.

Ver. 13 had said the time was so evil that the prudent man kept silence. All the more must the Lord Himself speak, as ver. 16 now proclaims. *Therefore thus saith Jehovah, God of Hosts,*[1] *Lord: On all open ways lamentation, and in all streets they shall be saying, Ah woe! Ah woe! And in all vineyards lamentation,*[2] *and they shall call the ploughman to wailing and to lamentation them that are skilful in dirges*—town and country, rustic and artist alike—*for I shall pass through thy midst, saith Jehovah.* It is the solemn formula of the Great Passover, when Egypt was filled with wailing and there were dead in every house.

The next verse starts another, but a kindred, theme. As blind as was Israel's confidence in ritual, so blind was their confidence in dogma, and the popular dogma was that of the *Day of Jehovah.*

All popular hopes expect their victory to come in a single sharp crisis—a day. And again, the day of any one means either the day he has appointed, or the day of his display and triumph. So Jehovah's day meant to the people the day of His judgment, or of His triumph: His triumph in war over their enemies, His judgment upon the heathen. But Amos, whose keynote has been that judgment begins at home, cries woe upon such hopes, and tells his people that for them the day of Jehovah is not victory, but rather insidious, importunate, inevitable death. And this he describes as a man who has lived, alone with wild beasts, from

[1] *God of Hosts,* perhaps an intrusion (?) between אדני and יהוה.

[2] I have ventured to rearrange the order of the clauses, which in the original is evidently dislocated.

the jungles of the Jordan, where the lions lurk, to the huts of the desert infested by snakes.

Woe unto them that long for the day of Jehovah! What have you to do with the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light. As when a man fleeth from the face of a lion, and a bear falls upon him; and he comes into his home,[1] *and,* breathless, *leans his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bites him.* And then, as if appealing to Heaven for confirmation: Is it not so? *Is it not darkness, the day of Jehovah, and not light? storm darkness, and not a ray of light upon it?*

Then Amos returns to the worship, that nurse of their vain hopes, that false prophet of peace, and he hears God speak more strongly than ever of its futility and hatefulness.

I hate, I loathe your feasts, and I will not smell the savour of your gatherings to sacrifice. For with pagan folly they still believed that the smoke of their burnt-offerings went up to heaven and flattered the nostrils of Deity. How ingrained was this belief may be judged by us from the fact that the terms of it had to be adopted by the apostles of a spiritual religion, if they would make themselves understood, and are now the metaphors of the sacrifices of the Christian heart.[2] *Though ye bring to Me burnt-offerings and your meal-offerings I will not be pleased, or your thank-offerings of fatted calves, I will not look at them. Let cease from Me the noise of thy songs; to the playing of thy viols I will not listen. But let justice roll on like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.*

Then follows the remarkable appeal from the habits of this age to those of the times of Israel's simplicity. *Was it flesh- or meal-offerings that ye brought Me in the*

[1] Lit. *the house.* [2] Eph. v. 2; etc.

wilderness, forty years, O house of Israel?[1] That is to say, at the very time when God made Israel His people, and led them safely to the promised land—the time when of all others He did most for them—He was not moved to such love and deliverance by the propitiatory bribes, which this generation imagine to be so availing and indispensable. Nay, those still shall not avail, for exile from the land shall now as surely come in spite of them, as the possession of the land in old times came without them. This at least seems to be the drift of the very obscure verse which follows, and is the unmistakable statement of the close of the oracle. *But ye shall lift up . . . your king and . . . your god, images which you have made for yourselves;*[2] *and I will carry you away into exile far*

[1] No one doubts that this verse is interrogative. But the Authorised Eng. Ver. puts it in a form—*Have ye brought unto Me?* etc.—which implies blame that they did not do so. Ewald was the first to see that, as rendered above, an appeal to the forty years was the real intention of the verse. So after him nearly all critics, also the Revised Eng. Ver.: *Did ye bring unto Me?* On the whole question of the possibility of such an appeal see above, pp. 100 ff., and cf. Jer. vii. 22, which distinctly declares that in the wilderness God prescribed no ritual to Israel.

[2] Ver. 26 is very difficult, for both the text and the rendering of all the possible alternatives of it are quite uncertain. (1) As to the *text*, the present division into words must be correct; at least no other is possible. But the present order of the words is obviously wrong. For *your images* is evidently described by the relative clause *which you have made*, and ought to stand next it. What then is to be done with the two words that at present come between—*star of your god*? Are they both a mere gloss, as Robertson Smith holds, and therefore to be struck out? or should they precede the pair of words, כיון צלמיכם, which they now follow? This is the order of the text which the LXX. translator had before him, only for כון he misread רִיפָן or רִיוָן: καὶ ἀνελάβετε τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ Μωλὸχ καὶ τὸ ἄστρον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑμῶν Ῥαιφάν [Ῥεφάν, Q], τοὺς τύπους αὐτῶν [om. AQ] οὓς ἐποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς. This arrangement has the further evidence in its

beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah—God of Hosts is His Name![1] So this chapter closes like the previous, with

favour, that it brings *your god* into proper parallel with *your king*. The Hebrew text would then run thus:—

ונשאתם את סכות מלככם ואת [כוכב אלהיכם]
כיון צלמיכם אשר עשיתם לכם

(2) The translation of this text is equally difficult: not in the verb ונשאתם, for both the grammar and the argument oblige us to take it as future, *and ye shall lift up*; but in the two words סכות and כיון. Are these common nouns, or proper names of deities in apposition to *your king* and *your god*? The LXX. takes סכות as = *tabernacle*, and כיון as a proper name (Theodotion takes both as proper names). The Auth. Eng. Ver. follows the LXX. (except that it takes *king* for the name *Moloch*). Schrader (*Stud. u. Krit.*, 1874, 324; *K.A.T.*, 442 f.) takes them as the consonants of Sakkut, a name of the Assyrian god Adar, and of Kewan, the Assyrian name for the planet Saturn: *Ye shall take up Sakkut your king and Kewan your star-god, your images which*... Baethgen goes further and takes both the מלך of מלכיכם and the צלם of צלמיכם as Moloch and Ṣelam, proper names, in combination with Sakkut and Kewan (*Beitr. z. Sem. Rel.*, 239). Now it is true that the Second Book of Kings implies that the worship of the host of heaven existed in Samaria before its fall (2 Kings xvii. 16), but the introduction into Samaria of Assyrian gods (among them Adar) is placed by it after the fall (2 Kings xvii. 31), and besides, Amos does not elsewhere speak of the worship of foreign gods, nor is the mention of them in any way necessary to the argument here. On the contrary, even if Amos were to mention the worship of idols by Israel, would he have selected at this point the Assyrian ones? (See, however, Tiele, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, III., p. 211, who makes Koun and the planet Keiwan purely Phœnician deities.) Some critics take סכות and כיון as common nouns in the construct state. So Ewald, and so most recently Robertson Smith (*O.T.J.C.*, 2): *the shrine of your king and the stand of your images.* This is more in harmony with the absence from the rest of Amos of any hint as to the worship of idols, but an objection to it, and a very strong one, is that the alleged common nouns are not found elsewhere in Hebrew. In view of this conflicting evidence it is best therefore to leave the words untranslated, as in the text above. It is just possible that they may themselves be later insertions, for the verse would read very well without them: *And ye shall lift up your king and your images which you have made to yourselves.*

[1] The last clause is peculiar. Two clauses seem to have run into

the marshalling of God's armies. But as there His hosts were the movements of Nature and the Great Stars, so here they are the nations of the world. By His rule of both He is the God of Hosts.

3. "At Ease in Zion."

Amos vi.

The evil of the national worship was the false political confidence which it engendered. Leaving the ritual alone, Amos now proceeds to assault this confidence. We are taken from the public worship of the people to the private banquets of the rich, but again only in order to have their security and extravagance contrasted with the pestilence, the war and the captivity, that are rapidly approaching.

Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion[1]—it is a proud and overweening ease which the word expresses—*and that trust in the mount of Samaria! Men of mark of the first of the peoples*—ironically, for that is Israel's opinion of itself—*and to them do the house of Israel resort! . . .*[2]

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one—*saith Jehovah, God of Hosts*, and *God of Hosts is His Name*. The word שמו = *His Name*, may have been added to give the oracle the same conclusion as the oracle at the end of the preceding chapter; and it is not to be overlooked that שמו at the end of a clause does not occur elsewhere in the book outside the three questioned Doxologies iv. 13, v. 8, ix. 6. Further, see below, pp. 204 f.

[1] *In Zion*: "very suspicious," Cornill. But see pp. 135 f.

[2] I remove ver. 2 to a note, not that I am certain that it is not by Amos—who can be dogmatic on such a point?—but because the text of it, the place which it occupies, and its relation to the facts of current history, all raise doubts. Moreover it is easily detached from the context, without disturbing the flow of the chapter, which indeed runs more equably without it. The Massoretic text gives: *Pass over to Calneh, and see; and go thence to Hamath Rabbah, and come down to Gath of the Philistines: are they better than these kingdoms, or is their territory larger than yours?* Presumably *these*

Ye that put off the day of calamity[1] *and draw near the sessions of injustice*[2]—an epigram and proverb, for it is the universal way of men to wish and fancy far away the very crisis that their sins are hastening on. Isaiah described this same generation as drawing iniquity with cords of hypocrisy, and sin as it were with a cart-rope! *That lie on ivory diwans and sprawl on their couches*—another luxurious custom, which filled this rude shepherd with contempt—*and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall*[3]—

kingdoms are Judah and Israel. But that can only mean that Israel is the best of the peoples, a statement out of harmony with the irony of ver. 1, and impossible in the mouth of Amos. Geiger, therefore, proposes to read: "Are you better than these kingdoms—*i.e.* Calneh, Hamath, Gath—or is your territory larger than theirs?" But this is also unlikely, for Israel's territory was much larger than Gath's. Besides, the question would have force only if Calneh, Hamath and Gath had already fallen. Gath had, but it is at least very questionable whether Hamath had. Therefore Schrader (*K.A.T.*, 444) rejects the whole verse; and Kuenen agrees that if we are to understand Assyrian conquests, it is hardly possible to retain the verses. Bickell's first argument against the verse, that it does not fit into the metrical system of Amos vi. 1-7, is precarious; his second, that it disturbs the grammar, which it makes to jump suddenly from the third person in ver. 1 to the second in ver. 2, and back to the third in ver. 3, is not worth anything, for such a jump occurs within ver. 3 itself.

[1] Davidson, *Syntax*, § 100, R. 5.

[2] שבת חמס; LXX. *σαββάτων ψευδῶν*, on which hint Hoffmann renders the verse: "you that daily demand the tribute of evil (cf. Ezek. xvi. 33), and every Sabbath extort by violence." But this is both unnecessary and opposed to viii. 5, which tells us no trade was done on the Sabbath. שבת is to be taken in the common sense of sitting in judgment (rather than with Wellhausen), in the sense of the enthronement of wrong-doing.

[3] To this day, in some parts of Palestine, the general fold into which the cattle are shut contains a portion railed off for calves and lambs (cf. Dr. M. Blanckenhorn of Erlangen in the *Mittheilungen u. Nachrichten* of the D.P.V., 1895, p. 37, with a sketch). It must be this to which Amos refers.

that is, only the most delicate of meats—*who prate* or *purr* or *babble to the sound of the viol, and as if they were David* himself *invent for them instruments of song;*[1] *who drink wine by ewerfuls—waterpotfuls—and anoint with the finest of oil—yet never do they grieve at the havoc of Joseph!* The havoc is the moral havoc, for the social structure of Israel is obviously still secure.[2] The rich are indifferent to it; they have wealth, art, patriotism, religion, but neither heart for the poverty nor conscience for the sin of their people. We know their kind! They are always with us, who live well and imagine they are proportionally clever and refined. They have their political zeal, will rally to an election when the interests of their class or their trade is in danger. They have a robust and exuberant patriotism, talk grandly of commerce, empire and the national destiny; but for the real woes and sores of the people, the poverty, the overwork, the drunkenness, the dissoluteness, which more affect a nation's life than anything else, they have no pity and no care.

Therefore now—the double initial of judgment—*shall they go into exile at the head of the exiles, and stilled shall be the revelry of the dissolute*—literally *the sprawlers*, as in ver. 4, but used here rather in the moral than in the physical sense. *Sworn hath the Lord Johovah by Himself—'tis the oracle of Johovah*

[1] Or perhaps *melodies, airs.*

[2] Of course, it is possible that here again, as in v. 15 and 16, we have prophecy later than the disaster of 734, when Tiglath-Pileser made a great *breach* or *havoc* in the body politic of Israel by taking Gilead and Galilee captive. But this is scarcely probable, for Amos almost everywhere lays stress upon the moral corruption of Israel, as her real and essential danger.

God of Hosts: I am loathing[1] *the pride of Jacob, and his palaces do I hate, and I will pack up a city and its fulness.*[2] . . . *For, behold, Jehovah is commanding, and He will smite the great house into ruins and the small house into splinters.* The collapse must come, postpone it as their fancy will, for it has been worked for and is inevitable. How could it be otherwise? *Shall horses run on a cliff, or the sea be ploughed by oxen*[3]*—that ye should turn justice to poison and the fruit of righteousness to wormwood! Ye that exult in Lo-Debar and say, By our own strength have we taken to ourselves Ḳarnaim.* So Grätz rightly reads the verse. The Hebrew text and all the versions take these names as if they were common nouns—Lo-Debar, *a thing of nought*; Ḳarnaim, *a pair of horns*—and doubtless it was just because of this possible play upon their names, that Amos selected these two out of all the recent conquests of Israel. Karnaim, in full Ashteroth Karnaim, *Astarte of Horns*, was that immemorial fortress and sanctuary which lay out upon the great plateau of Bashan towards Damascus; so obvious and cardinal a site that it appears in the sacred history both in the earliest recorded campaign in Abraham's time and in one of the latest under the Maccabees.[4] Lo-Debar was of Gilead, and probably lay on that last rampart of the province northward, overlooking the Yarmuk, a strategical point which must have

[1] מתאב for מתעב

[2] Some words must have dropped out here. For these and the following verses 9 and 10 on the pestilence see pp. 178 ff.

[3] So Michaelis, בְּבָקָר יָם for בְּבָקָרִים

[4] Gen. xiv. 5; 1 Macc. v. In the days of Eusebius and Jerome (4th century) there were two places of the name: one of them doubtless the present Tell Ashtara south of El-Merkez, the other distant from that fourteen Roman miles.

often been contested by Israel and Aram, and with which no other Old Testament name has been identified.[1] These two fortresses, with many others, Israel had lately taken from Aram; but not, as they boasted, *by their own strength.* It was only Aram's pre-occupation with Assyria now surgent on the northern flank, which allowed Israel these easy victories. And this same northern foe would soon overwhelm themselves. *For, behold, I am to raise up against you, O house of Israel—'tis the oracle of Jehovah God of the hosts*[2]*—a Nation, and they shall oppress you from the Entrance of Hamath to the Torrent of the ʿArabah.* Every one knows the former, the Pass between the Lebanons, at whose mouth stands Dan, northern limit of Israel; but it is hard to identify the latter. If Amos means to include Judah, we should have expected the Torrent of Egypt, the present Wady el ʿArish; but the Wady of the ʿArabah may be a corresponding valley in the eastern watershed issuing in the ʿArabah. If Amos threatens only the Northern Kingdom, he intends some wady running down to that Sea of the ʿArabah, the Dead Sea, which is elsewhere given as the limit of Israel.[3]

[1] Along this ridge ran, and still runs, one of the most important highways to the East, that from Beth-Shan by Gadera to Edrei. About seven miles east from Gadera lies a village, Ibdar, "with a good spring and some ancient remains" (Schumacher, *N. Ajlun*, 101). Lo-Debar is mentioned in 2 Sam. ix. 45; xvii. 27; and doubtless the Lidebir of Josh. xiii. 26 on the north border of Gilead is the same.

[2] With the article, an unusual form of the title. LXX. here *κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων.*

[3] 2 Kings xiv. 25. The Torrent of the 'Arabah can scarcely be the Torrent of the 'Arabim of Isa. xv. 7, for the latter was outside Israel's territory, and the border between Moab and Edom. The LXX render *Torrent of the West*, *τῶν δυσμῶν.*

The Assyrian flood, then, was about to break, and the oracles close with the hopeless prospect of the whole land submerged beneath it.

4. A Fragment from the Plague.

In the above exposition we have omitted two very curious verses, 9 and 10, which are held by some critics to interrupt the current of the chapter, and to reflect an entirely different kind of calamity from that which it predicts. I do not think these critics right, for reasons I am about to give; but the verses are so remarkable that it is most convenient to treat them by themselves apart from the rest of the chapter. Here they are, with the verse immediately in front of them.

I am loathing the pride of Jacob, and his palaces I hate. And I will give up a city and its fulness to . . . (perhaps *siege* or *pestilence*?). *And it shall come to pass, if there be left ten men in one house, and they die,*[1]. . . *that his cousin*[2] *and the man to burn him shall lift him to bring the body*[3] *out of the house, and they shall say to one who is in the recesses of the house,*[4] *Are there any more with thee? And he shall say, Not one . . . and they shall say, Hush! (for one must not make mention of the name of Jehovah).*

This grim fragment is obscure in its relation to the

[1] Here there is evidently a gap in the text. The LXX. insert καὶ ὑπολειφθήσονται οἱ κατάλοιποι; perhaps therefore the text originally ran *and the survivors die.*

[2] Or *uncle*—that is, a distant relative, presumably because all the near ones are dead.

[3] Literally *bones.*

[4] LXX. τοῖς προεστηκόσι: evidently in ignorance of the reading or the meaning.

context. But the death of even so large a household as ten—the funeral left to a distant relation—the disposal of the bodies by burning instead of the burial customary among the Hebrews [1]—sufficiently reflect the kind of calamity. It is a weird little bit of memory, the recollection of an eye-witness, from one of those great pestilences which, during the first half of the eighth century, happened not seldom in Western Asia.[2] But what does it do here? Wellhausen says that there is nothing to lead up to the incident; that before it the chapter speaks, not of pestilence, but only of political destruction by an enemy. This is not accurate. The phrase immediately preceding may mean either *I will shut up a city and its fulness*, in which case a siege is meant, and a siege was the possibility both of famine and pestilence; or *I will give up the city and its fulness* . . . , in which case a word or two may have been dropped, as words have undoubtedly been dropped at the end of the next verse, and one ought perhaps to add *to the pestilence*.[3] The latter alternative is the more probable, and this may be one of the passages, already alluded to,[4] in which the want of connection with the preceding verses is to be explained, not upon the favourite theory that there has been a violent

[1] The burning of a body was regarded, as we have seen (Amos ii. 1), as a great sacrilege; and was practised, outside times of pestilence only in cases of great criminals: Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9; Josh. vii. 25. Doughty (*Arabia Deserta*, 68) mentions a case in which, in Medina, a Persian pilgrim was burned to death by an angry crowd for defiling Mohammed's tomb.

[2] The Assyrian inscriptions record at least three—in 803, 765, 759.

[3] As in Psalm lxxviii. 50. הִסְגִּיר, to give up, is so seldom used absolutely (Deut. xxxii. 30 is poetry and elliptic) that we may well believe it was followed by words signifying to what the city was to be given up.

[4] Pp. 141 f.

intrusion into the text, but upon the too much neglected hypothesis that some words have been lost.

The uncertainty of the text, however, does not weaken the impression of its ghastly realism: the unclean and haunted house; the kinsman and the body-burner afraid to search through the infected rooms, and calling in muffled voice to the single survivor crouching in some far corner of them, *Are there any more with thee?* his reply, *None*—himself the next! Yet these details are not the most weird. Over all hangs a terror darker than the pestilence. *Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?* Such, as we have heard from Amos, was the settled faith of the age. But in times of woe it was held with an awful and a craven superstition. The whole of life was believed to be overhung with loose accumulations of Divine anger. And as in some fatal hollow in the high Alps, where any noise may bring down the impending masses of snow, and the fearful traveller hurries along in silence, so the men of that superstitious age feared, when an evil like the plague was imminent, even to utter the Deity's name, lest it should loosen some avalanche of His wrath. *And he said, Hush! for,* adds the comment, one *must not make mention of the name of Jehovah.*

This reveals another side of the popular religion which Amos has been attacking. We have seen it as the sheer superstition of routine; but we now know that it was a routine broken by panic. The God who in times of peace was propitiated by regular supplies of savoury sacrifice and flattery, is conceived, when His wrath is roused and imminent, as kept quiet only by the silence of its miserable objects. The false peace of ritual is tempered by panic.

CHAPTER X

DOOM OR DISCIPLINE?

Amos viii. 4—ix.

WE now enter the Third Section of the Book of Amos: chaps. vii.—ix. As we have already treated the first part of it—the group of four visions, which probably formed the prophet's discourse at Bethel, with the interlude of his adventure there (vii.—viii. 3)[1]—we may pass at once to what remains: from viii. 4 to the end of the book. This portion consists of groups of oracles more obscure in their relations to each other than any we have yet studied, and probably containing a number of verses which are not from Amos himself. They open in a denunciation of the rich, which echoes previous oracles, and soon pass to judgments of a kind already threatened, but now with greater relentlessness. Then, just as all is at the darkest, lights break; exceptions are made; the inevitable captivity is described no more as doom, but as discipline; and, with only this preparation for a change, we are swept out on a scene, in which, although the land is strewn with the ruins that have been threatened, the sunshine of a new day floods them; the promise of restoration is given; Nature

[1] See Chapter VI., Section 3.

herself will be regenerated, and the whole life of Israel planted on its own ground again.

Whether it was given to Amos himself to behold this day—whether these last verses of the book were his "Nunc Dimittis," or the hope of a later generation, which found his book intolerably severe, and mingled with its judgments their own new mercies—we shall try to discover further on. Meanwhile there is no doubt that we start with the authentic oracles of the prophet. We know the ring of his voice. To the tyranny of the rich, which he has so often lashed, he now adds the greed and fraud of the traders; and he paints Israel's doom in those shapes of earthquake, eclipse and famine with which his own generation had recently become familiar. Note that in this first group Amos employs only physical calamities, and says nothing of war and captivity. If the standard which we have already applied to the growth of his doctrine be correct, these ought therefore to be counted among his earlier utterances. War and captivity follow in chap. ix. That is to say, this Third Section follows the same line of development as both the First and the Second.

I. Earthquake, Eclipse and Famine.

Amos viii. 4-14.

Hear this, ye who trample the needy, and would put an end to[1] *the lowly of the land, saying, When will the New-Moon be over, that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open corn (by making small the measure, but large the weight, and falsifying the fraudulent balances; buying the wretched for silver, and the*

[1] The phrase is uncertain.

needy for a pair of shoes!), *and that we may sell as grain the refuse of the corn!* The parenthesis puzzles, but is not impossible: in the speed of his scorn, Amos might well interrupt the speech of the merchants by these details of their fraud,[1] flinging these in their teeth as they spoke. The existence at this date of the New-Moon and Sabbath as days of rest from business is interesting; but even more interesting is the peril to which they lie open. As in the case of the Nazirites and the prophets, we see how the religious institutions and opportunities of the people are threatened by worldliness and greed. And, as in every other relevant passage of the Old Testament, we have the interests of the Sabbath bound up in the same cause with the interests of the poor. The Fourth Commandment enforces the day of rest on behalf of the servants and bondsmen. When a later prophet substitutes for religious fasts the ideals of social service, he weds with the latter the security of the Sabbath from all business.[2] So here Amos emphasises that the Sabbath is threatened by the same worldliness and love of money which tramples on the helpless. The interests of the Sabbath are the interests of the poor: the enemies of the Sabbath are the enemies of the poor. And all this illustrates our Saviour's saying, that *the Sabbath was made for man.*

[1] Wellhausen thinks that the prophet could not have put the parenthesis in the mouth of the traders, and therefore regards it as an intrusion or gloss. But this is hypercriticism. The last clause, however, may be a mere clerical repetition of ii. 6.

[2] Isa. lviii. See the exposition of the passage in the writer's *Isaiah* xl.—lxvi. (Expositor's Bible Series), pp. 417 ff.: "Our prophet, while exalting the practical service of man at the expense of certain religious forms, equally exalts the observance of the Sabbath; . . . he places the keeping of the Sabbath on a level with the practice of love."

But, as in the rest of the book, judgment again follows hard on sin. *Sworn hath Jehovah by the pride of Jacob, Never shall I forget their deeds.* It is as before. The chief spring of the prophet's inspiration is his burning sense of the personal indignation of God against crimes so abominable. God is the God of the poor, and His anger rises, as we see the anger of Christ arise, heavy against their tyrants and oppressors. Such sins are intolerable to Him. But the feeling of their intolerableness is shared by the land itself, the very fabric of nature; the earthquake is the proof of it. *For all this shall not the land tremble and her every inhabitant mourn? and she shall rise like the Nile in mass, and heave and sink like the Nile of Egypt.*[1]

To the earthquake is added the eclipse: one had happened in 803, and another in 763, the memory of which probably inspired the form of this passage. *And it shall be in that day—'tis the oracle of the Lord Jehovah—that I shall bring down the sun at noon, and cast darkness on the earth in broad day.*[2] *And I will turn your festivals into mourning, and all your songs to a dirge. And I will bring up upon all loins sackcloth and on every head baldness, and I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it as a bitter day.*

But the terrors of earthquake and eclipse are not sufficient for doom, and famine is drawn upon.

Lo, days are coming—'tis the oracle of the Lord Jehovah—that I will send famine on the land, not a famine of bread nor a drouth of water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah. And they shall wander from sea

[1] *She shall rise*, etc.—The clause is almost the same as in ix. 5*b*, and the text differs from the LXX., which omits *and heave*. Is it an insertion?

[2] Literally *in the day of light.*

to sea, and from the dark North to the Sunrise shall they run to and fro, to seek the word of Jehovah, and they shall not find it; . . . who swear by Samaria's Guilt—the golden calf in the house of the kingdom at Bethel[1]—*and say, As liveth thy God, O Dan! and, As liveth the way to Beersheba! and they shall fall and not rise any more.* I have omitted ver. 13: *in that day shall the fair maids faint and the youths for thirst*; and I append my reasons in a note. Some part of the received text must go, for while vv. 11 and 12 speak of a spiritual drought, the drought of 13 is physical. And ver. 14 follows 12 better than it follows 13. The oaths mentioned by Bethel, Dan, Beersheba, are not specially those of young men and maidens, but of the whole nation, that run from one end of the land to the other, Dan to Beersheba, seeking for some word of Jehovah.[2] One of the oaths, *As liveth the way to Beersheba*,[3] is so curious that

[1] That is, Samaria is used in the wider sense of the kingdom, not the capital, and there is no need for Wellhausen's substitution of Bethel for it.

[2] This in answer to Gunning (*De Godspraken van Amos*, 1885), Wellh. *in loco*, and König (*Einleitung*, p. 304, *d*), who reckon vv. 11 and 12 to be the insertion: the latter on the additional ground that the formula of ver. 13, *in that day*, points back to ver. 9; but not to the *Lo, days are coming* of ver. 11. But thus to miss out vv. 11 and 12 leaves us with greater difficulties than before. For without them how are we to explain the *thirst* of ver. 13. It is left unintroduced; there is no hint of a drought in 9 and 10. It seems to me then that, since we must omit some verse, it ought to be ver. 13; and this the rather that if omitted it is not missed. It is just the kind of general statement that would be added by an unthinking scribe; and it does not readily connect with ver. 14, while ver. 12 does do so. For why should youths and maids be specially singled out as swearing by Samaria, Dan and Beersheba? These were the oaths of the whole people, to whom vv. 11 and 12 refer. I see a very clear case, therefore, for omitting ver. 13.

[3] LXX. here gives a mere repetition of the preceding oath.

some have doubted if the text be correct. But strange as it may appear to us to speak of the life of the lifeless, this often happens among the Semites. To-day Arabs "swear *wa hyât*, 'by the life of,' even of things inanimate; 'By the life of this fire, or of this coffee.'"[1] And as Amos here tells us that the Israelite pilgrims swore by the way to Beersheba, so do the Moslems affirm their oaths by the sacred way to Mecca.

Thus Amos returns to the chief target of his shafts—the senseless, corrupt worship of the national sanctuaries. And this time—perhaps in remembrance of how they had silenced the word of God when he brought it home to them at Bethel—he tells Israel that, with all their running to and fro across the land, to shrine after shrine in search of the word, they shall suffer from a famine and drouth of it. Perhaps this is the most effective contrast in which Amos has yet placed the stupid ritualism of his people. With so many things to swear by; with so many holy places that once were the homes of Vision, Abraham's Beersheba, Jacob's Bethel, Joshua's Gilgal—nay, a whole land over which God's voice had broken in past ages, lavish as the rain; with, too, all their assiduity of sacrifice and prayer, they should nevertheless starve and pant for that living word of the Lord, which they had silenced in His prophet.

Thus, men may be devoted to religion, may be loyal to their sacred traditions and institutions, may haunt the holy associations of the past and be very assiduous with their ritual—and yet, because of their worldliness, pride and disobedience, never feel that moral inspiration, that clear call to duty, that comfort

[1] Doughty: *Arabia Deserta* I. 269.

in pain, that hope in adversity, that good conscience at all times, which spring up in the heart like living water. Where these be not experienced, orthodoxy, zeal, lavish ritual, are all in vain.

2. Nemesis.

Amos ix. 1-6.

There follows a Vision in Bethel, the opening of which, *I saw the Lord*, immediately recalls the great inauguration of Isaiah. He also *saw the Lord*; but how different the Attitude, how other the Word! To the statesman-prophet the Lord is *enthroned*, surrounded by the court of heaven; and though the temple rocks to the intolerable thunder of their praise, they bring to the contrite man beneath the consciousness of a life-long mission. But to Amos the Lord is *standing* and alone—to this lonely prophet God is always alone —and His message may be summed up in its initial word, *Smite*. There—Government: hierarchies of service, embassies, clemencies, healings, and though at first devastation, thereafter the indestructible hope of a future. Here—Judgment: that Figure of Fate which terror's fascinated eye ever sees alone; one final blow and irreparable ruin. And so, as with Isaiah we saw how constructive prophecy may be, with Amos we behold only the preparatory havoc, the levelling and clearing of the ground of the future.

I have seen the Lord standing over the Altar, and He said, Smite the capital -of the pillar—*that the* very *thresholds*[1] *quake, and break them on the head of all of them!* It is a shock that makes the temple reel

[1] Since it is the capital that has been struck, and the command is

from roof-tree to basement. The vision seems subsequent to the prophet's visit to Bethel; and it gathers his whole attack on the national worship into one decisive and irreparable blow. *The last of them will I slay with the sword: there shall not flee away of them one fugitive: there shall not escape of them a* single *survivor!* Neither hell nor heaven, mountain-top nor sea-bottom, shall harbour one of them. *If they break through to Sheol, thence shall My hand take them; and if they climb to heaven, thence shall I bring them down. If they hide in Carmel's top, thence will I find them out and fetch them; and if they conceal themselves from before Mine eyes in the bottom of the sea, thence shall I charge the Serpent and he shall bite them; and if they go into captivity before their foes*—to Israel as terrible a distance from God's face as Sheol itself!—*thence will I charge the sword and it shall slay them; and I will set Mine eye upon them for evil and not for good.*

It is a ruder draft of the Hundred and Thirty-Ninth Psalm; but the Divine Pursuer is Nemesis, and not Conscience.

And the Lord, Jehovah of the Hosts; Who toucheth the earth and it melteth, and all its inhabitants mourn, and it rises like the Nile, all of it together, *and sinks like the Nile of Egypt; Who buildeth His stories in the heavens, and His vault on the earth He foundeth; Who calleth to the waters of the sea and poureth them forth on the face of the earth—Jehovah* of Hosts *is His Name.*[1]

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given to break *the thresholds on the head of all of them*, many translate *lintels* or *architraves* instead of *thresholds* (*e.g.* Hitzig, and Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*). But the word סַפִּים always means thresholds, and the blow here is fundamental.

[1] LXX. adds *of Hosts*: on the whole passage see next chapter.

3. The Voices of Another Dawn.

Amos ix. 7-15.

And now we are come to the part where, as it seems, voices of another day mingle with that of Amos, and silence his judgments in the chorus of their unbroken hope. At first, however, it is himself without doubt who speaks. He takes up the now familiar truth, that when it comes to judgment for sin, Israel is no dearer to Jehovah than any other people of His equal Providence.

Are ye not unto Me, O children of Israel—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—just like the children of Kushites? mere black folk and far away! *Did I not bring up Israel from Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Ḳir?* Mark again the universal Providence which Amos proclaims: it is the due concomitant of his universal morality. Once for all the religion of Israel breaks from the characteristic Semitic belief that gave a god to every people, and limited both his power and his interests to that people's territory and fortunes. And if we remember how everything spiritual in the religion of Israel, everything in its significance for mankind, was rendered possible only because at this date it broke from and abjured the particularism in which it had been born, we shall feel some of the Titanic force of the prophet, in whom that break was achieved with an absoluteness which leaves nothing to be desired. But let us also emphasise, that it was by no mere method of the intellect or observation of history that Amos was led to assert the unity of the Divine Providence. The inspiration in this was a moral one: Jehovah was ruler and guide of all the

families of mankind, because He was exalted in righteousness; and the field in which that righteousness was proved and made manifest was the life and the fate of Israel. Therefore to this Amos now turns. *Lo, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the ground.* In other words, Jehovah's sovereignty over the world was not proved by Israel's conquest of the latter, but by His unflinching application of the principles of righteousness, at whatever cost, to Israel herself.

Up to this point, then, the voice of Amos is unmistakable, uttering the doctrine, so original to him, that in the judgment of God Israel shall not be specially favoured, and the sentence, we have heard so often from him, of her removal from her land. Remember, Amos has not yet said a word in mitigation of the sentence: up to this point of his book it has been presented as inexorable and final. But now to a statement of it as absolute as any that has gone before, there is suddenly added a qualification: *nevertheless I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* And then there is added a new picture of exile changed from doom to discipline, a process of sifting by which only the evil in Israel, *all the sinners of My people*, shall perish, but not a grain of the good. *For, lo, I am giving command, and I will toss the house of Israel among all the nations, like* something *that is tossed in a sieve, but not a pebble*[1] *shall fall to earth. By the sword shall die all the sinners of My people, they who say, The calamity shall not reach nor anticipate us.*[2]

[1] We should have expected *a grain*, but the word צְרוֹר only means small stone: cf. 2 Sam. xvii. 13. The LXX. has here σύντριμμα, fracture, ruin. Cf. *Z.A.T.W.*, III. 125.

[2] The text has been disturbed here; the verbs are in forms not

Now as to these qualifications of the hitherto unmitigated judgments of the book, it is to be noted that there is nothing in their language to lead us to take them from Amos himself. On the contrary, the last clause describes what he has always called a characteristic sin of his day. Our only difficulties are that hitherto Amos has never qualified his sentences of doom, and that the change now appears so suddenly that the two halves of the verse in which it does so absolutely contradict each other. Read them again, ver. 8: *Lo, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are on the sinful nation, and I will destroy it from off the face of the ground—nevertheless destroying I shall not destroy the house of Jacob: 'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* Can we believe the same prophet to have uttered at the same time these two statements? And is it possible to believe that prophet to be the hitherto unwavering, unqualifying Amos? Noting these things, let us pass to the rest of the chapter. We break from all shadows; the verses are verses of pure hope. The judgment on Israel is not averted; but having taken place her ruin is regarded as not irreparable.

In that day—the day Amos has threatened of overthrow and ruin—*I will raise again the fallen hut of David and will close up its breaches, and his ruins I will raise, and I will build it up as in the days of old,*[1] *that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations upon*

possible to the sense. For תַּגִּישׁ read either תָּשִׂיג with Hitzig or תִּגַּשׁ with Wellhausen. תַּקְהִים, Hiph., is not impossible in an intransitive sense, but probably Wellhausen is right in reading Pi, תִּקְהֲמוּ. The reading עדינו which the Greek suggests and Hoffmann and Wellhausen adopt is not so appropriate to the preceding verb as בעדינו of the text.

[1] The text reads *their breaches*, and some accordingly point סֻכַּת, *hut*,

whom My Name has been called—that is, as once their Possessor—*'tis the oracle of Jehovah, He who is about to do this.*

The *fallen hut of David* undoubtedly means the fall of the kingdom of Judah. It is not language Amos uses, or, as it seems to me, could have used, of the fall of the Northern Kingdom only.[1] Again, it is undoubted that Amos contemplated the fall of Judah: this is implicit in such a phrase as *the whole family that I brought up from Egypt.*[2] He saw then *the day* and *the ruins* of which ver. 11 speaks. The only question is, can we attribute to him the prediction of a restoration of these ruins? And this is a question which must be answered in face of the facts that the rest of his book is unrelieved by a single gleam of hope, and that his threat of the nation's destruction is absolute and final. Now it is significant that in face of those facts Cornill (though he has changed his opinion) once believed it was "surely possible for Amos to include restoration in his prospect of ruin," as (he might have added) other prophets undoubtedly do. I confess I cannot so readily get over the rest of the book and its gloom; and am the less inclined to be sure about these verses being Amos' own that it seems to have been not unusual for later generations, for whom the daystar was beginning to rise, to add their own inspired hopes to the unrelieved threats of their predecessors of the midnight. The mention of Edom does not help us much: in the days of Amos after the partial conquest by Uzziah

as if it were the plural *huts* (Hoffmann, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1883, 125; Schwally, *id.*, 1890, 226, n. 1; Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*). The LXX. has the sing., and it is easy to see how the plur. fem. suffix may have risen from confusion with the following conjunction.

[1] This against Cornill, *Einleitung*, 176. [2] iii. 1.

the promise of *the rest of Edom* was singularly appropriate. On the other hand, what interest had so purely ethical a prophet in the mere addition of territory? To this point we shall have to return for our final decision. We have still the closing oracle—a very pleasant piece of music, as if the birds had come out after the thunderstorm, and the wet hills were glistening in the sunshine.

Lo, days are coming—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—when the ploughman shall catch up the reaper, and the grape-treader him that streweth the seed. The seasons shall jostle each other, harvest following hard upon seed-time, vintage upon spring. It is that "happy contention of seasons" which Josephus describes as the perpetual blessing of Galilee.[1] *And the mountains shall drip with new wine, and all the hills shall flow down. And I will bring back the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build* the *waste cities and dwell* in them, *and plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof, and make gardens and eat their fruits. And I will plant them on their own ground; and they shall not be uprooted any more from their own ground which I have given to them, saith Jehovah thy God.*[2] Again we meet the difficulty: does the voice that speaks here speak with captivity already realised? or is it the voice of one who projects himself forward to a day, which, by the oath of the Lord Himself, is certain to come?

We have now surveyed the whole of this much-

[1] III. *Wars*, x. 8. With the above verses of the Book of Amos Lev. xxvi. 5 has been compared: "your threshing shall reach to the vintage and the vintage to the sowing time." But there is no reason to suppose that either of two so natural passages depends on the other.

[2] LXX. *God of Hosts.*

doubted, much-defended passage. I have stated fully the arguments on both sides. On the one hand, we have the fact that nothing in the language of the verses, and nothing in their historical allusions, precludes their being by Amos; we have also to admit that, having threatened a day of ruin, it was possible for Amos to realise by his mind's eye its arrival, and standing at that point to see the sunshine flooding the ruins and to prophesy a restoration. In all this there is nothing impossible in itself or inconsistent with the rest of the book. On the other hand, we have the impressive and incommensurable facts: *first*, that this change to hope comes suddenly, without preparation and without statement of reasons, at the very end of a book whose characteristics are not only a final and absolute sentence of ruin upon the people, and an outlook of unrelieved darkness, but scornful discouragement of every popular vision of a prosperous future; and, *second*, that the prophetic books contain numerous signs that later generations wove their own brighter hopes into the abrupt and hopeless conclusions of prophecies of judgment.

To this balance of evidence is there anything to add? I think there is; and that it decides the question. All these prospects of the future restoration of Israel are absolutely without a moral feature. They speak of return from captivity, of political restoration, of supremacy over the Gentiles, and of a revived Nature, hanging with fruit, dripping with must. Such hopes are natural and legitimate to a people who were long separated from their devastated and neglected land, and whose punishment and penitence were accomplished. But they are not natural to a prophet like Amos. Imagine him predicting a future like this! Imagine

him describing the consummation of his people's history, without mentioning one of those moral triumphs to rally his people to which his whole passion and energy had been devoted. To me it is impossible to hear the voice that cried, *Let justice roll on like waters and righteousness like a perennial stream,* in a peroration which is content to tell of mountains dripping with must and of a people satisfied with vineyards and gardens. These are legitimate hopes; but they are the hopes of a generation of other conditions and of other deserts than the generation of Amos.

If then the gloom of this great book is turned into light, such a change is not due to Amos.

CHAPTER XI

COMMON-SENSE AND THE REIGN OF LAW

Amos iii. 3-8; iv. 6-13; v. 8, 9; vi. 12; viii. 8; ix. 5, 6.

FOOLS, when they face facts, which is seldom, face them one by one, and, as a consequence, either in ignorant contempt or in panic. With this inordinate folly Amos charged the religion of his day. The superstitious people, careful of every point of ritual and very greedy of omens, would not ponder real facts nor set cause to effect. Amos recalled them to common life. *Does a bird fall upon a snare, except there be a loop on her? Does the trap itself rise from the ground, except it be catching something*—something alive in it that struggles, and so lifts the trap? *Shall the alarum be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?* Daily life is impossible without putting two and two together. But this is just what Israel will not do with the sacred events of their time. To religion they will not add common-sense.

For Amos himself, all things which happen are in sequence and in sympathy. He has seen this in the simple life of the desert; he is sure of it throughout the tangle and hubbub of history. One thing explains another; one makes another inevitable. When he has illustrated the truth in common life, Amos claims it for especially four of the great facts of the time. The sins of society, of which society is careless; the physical

calamities, which they survive and forget; the approach of Assyria, which they ignore; the word of the prophet, which they silence,—all these belong to each other. Drought, Pestilence, Earthquake, Invasion conspire—and the Prophet holds their secret.

Now it is true that for the most part Amos describes this sequence of events as the personal action of Jehovah. *Shall evil befall, and Jehovah not have done it? . . . I have smitten you. . . . I will raise up against you a Nation. . . . Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!*[1] Yet even where the personal impulse of the Deity is thus emphasised, we feel equal stress laid upon the order and the inevitable certainty of the process. Amos nowhere uses Isaiah's great phrase: *a God of Mishpat*, a *God of Order* or *Law*. But he means almost the same thing: God works by methods which irresistibly fulfil themselves. Nay more. Sometimes this sequence sweeps upon the prophet's mind with such force as to overwhelm all his sense of the Personal within it. The Will and the Word of the God who causes the thing are crushed out by the "Must Be" of the thing itself. Take even the descriptions of those historical crises, which the prophet most explicitly proclaims as the visitations of the Almighty. In some of the verses all thought of God Himself is lost in the roar and foam with which that tide of necessity bursts up through them. The fountains of the great deep break loose, and while the universe trembles to the shock, it seems that even the voice of the Deity is overwhelmed. In one passage, immediately after describing Israel's ruin as due to Jehovah's word, Amos asks how could it have happened otherwise:—

[1] iii. 6*b*; iv. 9; vi. 14; iv. 12*b*.

Shall horses run up a cliff, or oxen plough the sea? that ye turn justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.[1] A moral order exists, which it is as impossible to break without disaster as it would be to break the natural order by driving horses upon a precipice. There is an inherent necessity in the sinners' doom. Again, he says of Israel's sin: *Shall not the Land tremble for this? Yea, it shall rise up together like the Nile, and heave and sink like the Nile of Egypt.*[2] The crimes of Israel are so intolerable, that in its own might the natural frame of things revolts against them. In these great crises, therefore, as in the simple instances adduced from everyday life, Amos had a sense of what we call law, distinct from, and for moments even overwhelming, that sense of the personal purpose of God, admission to the secrets of which had marked his call to be a prophet.[3]

These instincts we must not exaggerate into a system. There is no philosophy in Amos, nor need we wish there were. Far more instructive is what we do find—a virgin sense of the sympathy of all things, the thrill rather than the theory of a universe. And this faith, which is not a philosophy, is especially instructive on these two points: that it springs from the moral sense; and that it embraces, not history only, but nature.

It springs from the moral sense. Other races have arrived at a conception of the universe along other lines: some by the observation of physical laws valid to the recesses of space; some by logic and the unity of Reason. But Israel found the universe through the

[1] vi. 12. [2] viii. 8.

[3] iii. 7: *Jehovah God doeth nothing, but He hath revealed His secret to His servants the prophets.*

conscience. It is a historical fact that the Unity of God, the Unity of History and the Unity of the World, did, in this order, break upon Israel, through conviction and experience of the universal sovereignty of righteousness. We see the beginnings of the process in Amos. To him the sequences which work themselves out through history and across nature are moral. Righteousness is the hinge on which the world hangs; loosen it, and history and nature feel the shock. History punishes the sinful nation. But nature, too, groans beneath the guilt of man; and in the Drought, the Pestilence and the Earthquake provides his scourges. It is a belief which has stamped itself upon the language of mankind. What else is "plague" than "blow" or "scourge"?

This brings us to the second point—our prophet's treatment of Nature.

Apart from the disputed passages (which we shall take afterwards by themselves) we have in the Book of Amos few glimpses of nature, and these always under a moral light. There is not in any chapter a landscape visible in its own beauty. Like all desert-dwellers, who when they would praise the works of God lift their eyes to the heavens, Amos gives us but the outlines of the earth—a mountain range,[1] or the crest of a forest,[2] or the bare back of the land, bent from sea to sea.[3] Nearly all his figures are drawn from the desert—the torrent, the wild beasts, the wormwood.[4] If he visits the meadows of the shepherds, it is with the terror of the people's doom;[5] if the vineyards or orchards, it is with the mildew and

[1] i. 2; iii. 9; ix. 3.
[2] ii. 9.
[3] viii. 12.
[4] v. 24; 19, 20, etc.; 7; vi. 12.
[5] i. 2.

the locust;[1] if the towns, it is with drought, eclipse and earthquake.[2] To him, unlike his fellows, unlike especially Hosea, the whole land is one theatre of judgment; but it is a theatre trembling to its foundations with the drama enacted upon it. Nay, land and nature are themselves actors in the drama. Physical forces are inspired with moral purpose, and become the ministers of righteousness. This is the converse of Elijah's vision. To the older prophet the message came that God was not in the fire nor in the earthquake nor in the tempest, but only in the still small voice. But to Amos the fire, the earthquake and the tempest are all in alliance with the Voice, and execute the doom which it utters. The difference will be appreciated by us, if we remember the respective problems set to prophecy in those two periods. To Elijah, prophet of the elements, wild worker by fire and water, by life and death, the spiritual had to be asserted and enforced by itself. Ecstatic as he was, Elijah had to learn that the Word is more Divine than all physical violence and terror. But Amos understood that for his age the question was very different. Not only was the God of Israel dissociated from the powers of nature, which were assigned by the popular mind to the various Ba'alim of the land, so that there was a divorce between His government of the people and the influences that fed the people's life; but morality itself was conceived as provincial. It was narrowed to the national interests; it was summed up in mere rules of police, and these were looked upon as not so important as the observances of the ritual. Therefore Amos was driven to show that nature and morality

[1] iv. 9 ff. [2] iv. 6-11; vi. 11; viii. 8 ff.

are one. Morality is not a set of conventions. "Morality is the order of things." Righteousness is on the scale of the universe. All things tremble to the shock of sin; all things work together for good to them that fear God.

With this sense of law, of moral necessity, in Amos we must not fail to connect that absence of all appeal to miracle, which is also conspicuous in his book.

We come now to the three disputed passages:—

iv. 13:—*For, lo! He Who formed the hills,*[1] *and createth the wind,*[2] *and declareth to man what His*[3] *mind is; Who maketh the dawn into darkness, and marcheth on the heights of the land—Jehovah, God of Hosts, is His Name.*

v. 8, 9:—*Maker of the Pleiades and Orion,*[4] *turning to morning the murk, and day into night He darkeneth; Who calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them forth on the face of the earth—Jehovah His Name; Who flasheth ruin on the strong, and destruction cometh down on the fortress.*[5]

ix. 5, 6:—*And the Lord Jehovah of the Hosts, Who toucheth the earth and it rocketh, and all mourn that dwell on it, and it riseth like the Nile together, and sinketh like the Nile of Egypt; Who hath builded in the heavens His ascents, and founded His vault upon the earth; Who calleth to the waters of the sea, and poureth them on the face of the earth—Jehovah*[6] *His Name.*

These sublime passages it is natural to take as the

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[1] LXX. *the thunder.*

[2] Or *spirit.*

[3] *I.e. God's;* a more natural rendering than to take *his* (as Hitzig does) as meaning *man's.*

[4] See above, pp. 166 f. *n.*

[5] Text of last clause uncertain; see above, p. 167.

[6] LXX. *Jehovah of Hosts.*

triple climax of the doctrine we have traced through the Book of Amos. Are they not the natural leap of the soul to the stars? The same shepherd's eye which has marked sequence and effect unfailing on the desert soil, does it not now sweep the clear heavens above the desert, and find there also all things ordered and arrayed? The same mind which traced the Divine processes down history, which foresaw the hosts of Assyria marshalled for Israel's punishment, which felt the overthrow of justice shock the nation to their ruin, and read the disasters of the husbandman's year as the vindication of a law higher than the physical—does it not now naturally rise beyond such instances of the Divine order, round which the dust of history rolls, to the lofty, undimmed outlines of the Universe as a whole, and, in consummation of its message, declare that "all is Law," and Law intelligible to man?

But in the way of so attractive a conclusion the literary criticism of the book has interposed. It is maintained[1] that, while none of these sublime verses are indispensable to the argument of Amos, some of them actually interrupt it, so that when they are removed it becomes consistent; that such ejaculations in praise of Jehovah's creative power are not elsewhere met with in Hebrew prophecy before the time of the Exile; that they sound very like echoes of the Book of Job; and that in the Septuagint version of Hosea we actually find a similar doxology, wedged into the middle of an authentic verse of the prophet.[2] To these arguments against the genuineness of the three famous

[1] First in 1875 by Duhm, *Theol. der Proph.*, p. 119; and after him by Oort, *Theol. Tjidschrift*, 1880, pp. 116f.; Wellhausen, *in locis*; Stade *Gesch.*, I. 571; Cornill, *Einleitung*, 176. [2] Hosea xiii. 4.

passages, other critics, not less able and not less free, like Robertson Smith and Kuenen,[1] have replied that such ejaculations at critical points of the prophet's discourse "are not surprising under the general conditions of prophetic oratory"; and that, while one of the doxologies does appear to break the argument[2] of the context, they are all of them thoroughly in the spirit and the style of Amos. To this point the discussion has been carried; it seems to need a closer examination.

We may at once dismiss the argument which has been drawn from that obvious intrusion into the Greek of Hosea xiii. 4. Not only is this verse not so suited to the doctrine of Hosea as the doxologies are to the doctrine of Amos; but while they are definite and sublime, it is formal and flat—"Who made firm the heavens and founded the earth, Whose hands founded all the host of heaven, and He did not display them that thou shouldest walk after them." The passages in Amos are vision; this is a piece of catechism crumbling into homily.

Again—an argument in favour of the authenticity of these passages may be drawn from the character of their subjects. We have seen the part which the desert played in shaping the temper and the style of Amos. But the works of the Creator, to which these passages lift their praise, are just those most fondly dwelt upon by all the poetry of the desert. The Arabian nomad, when he magnifies the power of God, finds his subjects not on the bare earth about him, but in the brilliant heavens and the heavenly processes.

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[1] Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 399; Kuenen, *Hist. Krit. Einl.* (Germ. Ed.), II. 347.

[2] v. 8, 9.

Again, the critic who affirms that the passages in Amos "in every case sensibly disturb the connection,"[1] exaggerates. In the case of the first of them, chap. iv. 13, the disturbance is not at all "sensible"; though it must be admitted that the oracle closes impressively enough without it. The last of them, chap. ix. 5, 6—which repeats a clause already found in the book[2]—is as much in sympathy with its context as most of the oracles in the somewhat scattered discourse of that last section of the book. The real difficulty is the second doxology, chap. v. 8, 9, which does break the connection, and in a sudden and violent way. Remove it, and the argument is consistent. We cannot read chap. v. without feeling that, whether Amos wrote these verses or not, they did not originally stand where they stand at present.

Now, taken with this dispensableness of two of the passages and this obvious intrusion of one of them, the following additional fact becomes ominous. *Jehovah is His Name* (which occurs in two of the passages),[3] or *Jehovah of Hosts is His Name* (which occurs at least in one),[4] is a construction which does not happen elsewhere in the book, except in a verse where it is awkward and where we have already seen reason to doubt its genuineness.[5] But still more, the phrase does not occur in any other prophet, till we come down to the oracles which compose Isaiah xl.—lxvi. Here it happens thrice—twice in passages dating from the Exile,[6] and once in a passage suspected by some to be of still later

[1] Cornill, *Einl.*, 176.
[2] Cf. viii. 8.
[3] v. 8; ix. 6, though here LXX. read *Jehovah of Hosts is His Name.*
[4] iv. 13. See previous note.
[5] v. 27. See above, pp. 172 f. *n.*: cf. Hosea xii. 6.
[6] xlvii. 4 and liv. 5.

date.[1] In the Book of Jeremiah the phrase is found eight times ; but either in passages already on other grounds judged by many critics to be later than Jeremiah,[2] or where by itself it is probably an intrusion into the text.[3] Now is it a mere coincidence that a phrase, which, outside the Book of Amos, occurs only in writing of the time of the Exile and in passages considered for other reasons to be post-exilic insertions—is it a mere coincidence that within the Book of Amos it should again be found only in suspected verses ?

There appears to be in this more than a coincidence ; and the present writer cannot but feel a very strong case against the traditional belief that these doxologies are original and integral portions of the Book of Amos. At the same time a case which has failed to convince critics like Robertson Smith and Kuenen cannot be considered conclusive, and we are so ignorant of many of the conditions of prophetic oratory at this period that dogmatism is impossible. For instance, the use by Amos of the Divine titles is a matter over which uncertainty still lingers ; and any further argument on the subject must include a fuller discussion than space here allows of the remarkable distribution of those titles throughout the various sections of the book.[4]

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[1] xlviii. 2 : cf. Duhm, *in loco*, and Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*, 301.

[2] x. 16 ; xxxi. 35 ; xxxii. 18 ; l. 34 (perhaps a quotation from Isa. xlvii. 4) ; li. 19, 57.

[3] xlvi. 18, where the words צבאות שמו fail in LXX. ; xlviii. 15 *b*, where the clause in which it occurs is wanting in the LXX.

[4] But I have room at least for a bare statement of these remarkable facts :—

The titles for the God of Israel used in the Book of Amos are hese : (1) *Thy God, O Israel,* אלהיך ישראל ; (2) *Jehovah,* יהוה ; (3)

But if it be not given to us to prove this kind of authenticity—a question whose data are so obscure, yet whose answer fortunately is of so little significance—let us gladly welcome that greater Authenticity whose undeniable proofs these verses so splendidly exhibit. No one questions their right to the place which some great spirit gave them in this book—their suitableness to its grand and ordered theme, their pure vision and their eternal truth. That common-

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Lord Jehovah, אדני יהוה; (4) *Lord Jehovah of the Hosts*, אדני יהוה צבאות; (5) *Jehovah God of Hosts* or *of the Hosts*, יהוה אלהי צבאות or הצבאות.

Now in the First Section, chaps. i., ii., it is interesting that we find none of the variations which are compounded with *Hosts*, צבאות. By itself יהוה (especially in the phrase *Thus saith Jehovah*, כה אמר יהוה) is general; and once only (i. 8) is *Lord Jehovah* employed. The phrase, *oracle of Jehovah*, נְאֻם יהוה, is also rare; it occurs only twice (ii. 11, 16), and then only in the passage dealing with Israel, and not at all in the oracles against foreign nations.

In Sections II. and III. the simple יהוה is again most frequently used. But we find also *Lord Jehovah*, אדני יהוה (iii. 7, 8; iv. 2, 5; v. 3, with יהוה alone in the parallel ver. 4; vi. 8; vii. 1, 2, 4 *bis*, 5, 6; viii. 1, 3, 9, 11), used either indifferently with יהוה; or in verses where it seems more natural to emphasise the sovereignty of Jehovah than His simple Name (as, *e.g.*, where *He swears*, iv. 2, vi. 8, yet when the same phrase occurs in viii. 7 יהוה alone is used); or in the solemn Visions of the Third Section (but not in the Narrative); and sometimes we find in the Visions *Lord*, אדני, alone without יהוה (vii. 7, 8; ix. 1). The titles containing צבאות or אלהי צבאות occur *nine* times. Of these *five* are in passages which we have seen other reasons to suppose are insertions: two of the Doxologies—iv. 13, יהוה אלהי צבאות, and ix. 5, אדני יהוה הצבאות (in addition the LXX. read in ix. 6 יהוה צבאות), and in v. 14, 15 (see p. 168) and 27 (see p. 172), in all three יהוה אלהי צבאות. The *four* genuine passages are iii. 13, where we find יהוה אלהי הצבאות preceded by אדני; v. 16, where we have יהוה אלהי צבאות followed by אדני; vi. 8, יהוה אלהי צבאות, and vi. 14, יהוה אלהי צבאות. Throughout the last two sections of the book נְאֻם is used with all these forms of the Divine title.

sense, and that conscience, which, moving among the events of earth and all the tangled processes of history, find everywhere reason and righteousness at work, in these verses claim the Universe for the same powers, and see in stars and clouds and the procession of day and night the One Eternal God Who *declareth to man what His mind is.*

HOSEA

"For leal love have I desired and not sacrifice
And the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings."

CHAPTER XII

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

THE Book of Hosea consists of two unequal sections, chaps. i.—iii. and chaps. iv.—xiv., which differ in the dates of their standpoints, to a large extent also in the details of their common subjects, but still more largely in their form and style. The First Section is in the main narrative; though the style rises to the pitch of passionate pleading and promise, it is fluent and equable. If one verse be omitted and three others transposed,[1] the argument is continuous. In the Second Section, on the contrary, we have a stream of addresses and reflections, appeals, upbraidings, sarcasms, recollections of earlier history, denunciations and promises, which, with little logical connection and almost no pauses or periods, start impulsively from each other, and for a large part are expressed in elliptic and ejaculatory phrases. In the present restlessness of Biblical Criticism it would have been surprising if this difference of style had not prompted some minds to a difference of authorship. Grätz [2] has distinguished two Hoseas, separated by a period of fifty years. But if, as we shall see, the First Section reflects the end of the reign of Jeroboam II., who died about 743, then the next few years, with their revolutionary

[1] See below, pp. 213 f.

[2] *Geschichte*, pp. 93 ff., 214 ff., 439 f.

changes in Israel, are sufficient to account for the altered outlook of the Second Section ; while the altered style is fully explained by difference of occasion and motive. In both sections not only are the religious principles identical, and many of the characteristic expressions,[1] but there breathes throughout the same urgent and jealous temper, which renders Hosea's personality so distinctive among the prophets. Within this unity, of course, we must not be surprised to find, as in the Book of Amos, verses which cannot well be authentic.

First Section: Hosea's Prophetic Life.

With the removal of some of the verses the argument becomes clear and consecutive. After the story of the wife and children (i. 2-9), who are symbols of the land and people of Israel in their apostasy from God (2, 4, 6, 9), the Divine voice calls on the living generation to plead with their mother lest destruction come (ii. 2-5, Eng. ; ii. 4-7, Heb.[2]), but then passes definite sentence of desolation on the land and of exile on the people (6-13, Eng. ; 8-15, Heb.), which however is not final doom, but discipline,[3] with the ultimate promise of the return of the nation's youth, their renewed betrothal to Jehovah and the restoration of nature (14-23). Then follows the story of the prophet's restoration of his wife, also with discipline (chap. iii.).

Notice that, although the story of the wife's fall has preceded the declaration of Israel's apostasy, it is

[1] A list of the more obvious is given by Kuenen, p. 324.
[2] The first chapter in the Hebrew closes with ver. 9.
[3] Cf. this with Amos; above, pp. 192 ff.

Israel's restoration which preceedes the wife's. The ethical significance of this order we shall illustrate in the next chapter.

In this section the disturbing verses are i. 7 and the group of three—i. 10, 11, ii. 1 (Eng.; but ii. 1-3 Heb.). Chap. i. 7 introduces Judah as excepted from the curse passed upon Israel; it is so obviously intrusive in a prophecy dealing only with Israel, and it so clearly reflects the deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib in 701, that we cannot hold it for anything but an insertion of a date subsequent to that deliverance, and introduced by a pious Jew to signalise Judah's fate in contrast with Israel's.[1]

The other three verses (i. 10, 11, ii. 1, Eng.; ii. 1-3, Heb.) introduce a promise of restoration before the sentence of judgment is detailed, or any ethical conditions of restoration are stated. That is, they break and tangle an argument otherwise consistent and progressive from beginning to end of the Section. Every careful reader must feel them out of place where they lie. Their awkwardness has been so much appreciated that, while in the Hebrew text they have been separated from chap. i., in the Greek they have been separated from chap. ii. That is to say, some have felt they have no connection with what precedes them, others none with what follows them; while our English version, by distributing them between the two

[1] König's arguments (*Einleitung*, 309) in favour of the possibility of the genuineness of the verse do not seem to me to be conclusive. He thinks the verse admissible because Judah had sinned less than Israel; the threat in vv. 4-6 is limited to Israel; the phrase *Jehovah their God* is so peculiar that it is difficult to assign it to a mere expander of the text; and if it was a later hand that put in the verse, why did he not alter the judgments against Judæa, which occur further on in the book?

chapters, only makes more sensible their superfluity. If they really belong to the prophecy, their proper place is after the last verse of chap. ii.[1] This is actually the order in which part of it and part of them are quoted by St. Paul.[2] At the same time, when so arranged, they repeat somewhat awkwardly the language of ii. 23, and scarcely form a climax to the chapter. There is nothing in their language to lead us to doubt that they are Hosea's own; and ver. 11 shows that they must have been written at least before the captivity of Northern Israel.[3]

The only other suspected clause in this section is that in iii. 5, *and David their king*;[4] but if it be struck out the verse is rendered awkward, if not impossible, by the immediate repetition of the Divine name, which would not have been required in the absence of the suspected clause.[5]

The text of the rest of the section is remarkably free from obscurities. The Greek version offers few variants, and most of these are due to mistranslation.[6] In iii. 1 for *loved of a husband* it reads *loving evil.*

Evidently this section was written before the death of Jeroboam II. The house of Jehu still reigns; and as Hosea predicts its fall by war on the classic battle-ground of Jezreel, the prophecy must have been written

[1] So Cheyne and others, Kuenen adhering. König agrees that they have been removed from their proper place and the text corrupted.

[2] Rom. ix. 25, 26, which first give the end of Hosea ii. 23 (Heb. 25), and then the end of i. 10 (Heb. ii. 2). See below, p. 249, *n.* 2.

[3] 721 B.C.

[4] Stade, *Gesch.*, I. 577; Cornill, *Einleitung*, who also would exclude *no king and no prince* in iii. 4.

[5] This objection, however, does not hold against the removal of merely *and David*, leaving *their king*.

[6] ii. 7, 11, 14, 17 (Heb.). In i. 4 B-text reads Ἰούδα for יהוא, while Q^{mg} have Ἰησου.

before the actual fall, which took the form of an internal revolt against Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam. With this agrees the tone of the section. There are the same evils in Israel which Amos exposed in the prosperous years of the same reign; but Hosea appears to realise the threatened exile from a nearer standpoint. It is probable also that part of the reason of his ability to see his way through the captivity to the people's restoration is due to a longer familiarity with the approach of captivity than Amos experienced before he wrote. But, of course, for Hosea's promise of restoration there were, as we shall see, other and greater reasons of a religious kind.[1]

Second Section: Chaps. iv.—xiv.

When we pass into these chapters we feel that the times are changed. The dynasty of Jehu has passed: kings are falling rapidly: Israel devours its rulers:[2]

[1] In determining the date of the Book of Hosea the title in chap. i. is of no use to us: *The Word of Jehovah which was to Hosea ben Be'erî in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam ben Joash, king of Israel.* This title is trebly suspicious. First: the given reigns of Judah and Israel do not correspond; Jeroboam was dead before Uzziah. Second: there is no proof either in the First or Second Section of the book that Hosea prophesied after the reign of Jotham. Third: it is curious that in the case of a prophet of Northern Israel kings of Judah should be stated first, and four of them be given while only one king of his own country is placed beside them. On these grounds critics are probably correct who take the title as it stands to be the work of some later Judæan scribe who sought to make it correspond to the titles of the Books of Isaiah and Micah. He may have been the same who added chap. i. 7. The original form of the title probably was *The Word of God which was to Hosea son of Be'erî in the days of Jeroboam ben Joash, king of Israel,* and designed only for the First Section of the book, chaps. i.—iii.

[2] vii. 7. There are also other passages which, while they may

there is no loyalty to the king; he is suddenly cut off;[1] all the princes are revolters.[2] Round so despised and so unstable a throne the nation tosses in disorder. Conspiracies are rife. It is not only, as in Amos, the the sins of the luxurious, of them that are at ease in Zion, which are exposed; but also literal bloodshed: highway robbery with murder, abetted by the priests;[3] the thief breaketh in and the robber-troop maketh a raid.[4] Amos looked out on foreign nations across a quiet Israel; his views of the world are wide and clear; but in the Book of Hosea the dust is up, and into what is happening beyond the frontier we get only glimpses. There is enough, however, to make visible another great change since the days of Jeroboam. Israel's self-reliance is gone. She is as fluttered as a startled bird: *They call unto Egypt, they go unto Assyria.*[5] Their wealth is carried as a gift to King Jareb,[6] and they evidently engage in intrigues with Egypt. But everything is hopeless: kings cannot save, for Ephraim is seized by the pangs of a fatal crisis.[7]

This broken description reflects—and all the more faithfully because of its brokenness—the ten years which followed on the death of Jeroboam II. about 743.[8] His son Zechariah, who succeeded him, was in six months assassinated by Shallum ben Jabesh, who within a month more was himself cut down by

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be referred, as they stand, to the whole succession of illegitimate dynasties in Northern Israel from the beginning to the end of that kingdom, more probably reflect the same ten years of special anarchy and disorder after the death of Jeroboam II. See vii. 3 ff.; viii. 4, where the illegitimate kingmaking is coupled with the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom; xiii. 10, 11.

[1] x. 3, 7, 8, 15. [3] vi. 8, 9. [5] vii. 11. [7] xiii. 12 f.
[2] ix. 15. [4] vii. 1. [6] x. 6.

[8] The chronology of these years is exceedingly uncertain. Jeroboam

Menahem ben Gadi.[1] Menahem held the throne for six or seven years, but only by sending to the King of Assyria an enormous tribute which he exacted from the wealthy magnates of Israel.[2] Discontent must have followed these measures, such discontent with their rulers as Hosea describes. Pekahiah ben Menahem kept the throne for little over a year after his father's death, and was assassinated by his captain,[3] Pekah ben Remaliah, with fifty Gileadites, and Pekah took the throne about 736. This second and bloody usurpation may be one of those on which Hosea dwells; but if so it is the last historical allusion in his book. There is no reference to the war of Pekah and Rezin against Ahaz of Judah which Isaiah describes,[4] and to which Hosea must have alluded had he been still prophesying.[5] There is no allusion to its consequence in Tiglath-Pileser's conquest of Gilead

was dead about 743; in 738 Menahem gave tribute to Assyria; in 734 Tiglath-Pileser had conquered Aram, Gilead and Galilee in response to King Ahaz, who had a year or two before been attacked by Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel.

[1] 2 Kings xv. 8-16. It may be to this appearance of three kings within one month that there was originally an allusion in the now obscure verse of Hosea, v. 7.

[2] 2 Kings xv. 17-22.

[3] Or prince, שַׂר: cf. Hosea's denunciation of the שָׂרִים as rebels.

[4] Isa. vii.; 2 Kings xv. 37, 38.

[5] Some have found a later allusion in chap. x. 14: *like unto the destruction* of (?) *Shalman* (of ?) *Beth'Arbe'l.* Pusey, p. 5 *b*, and others take this to allude to a destruction of the Galilean Arbela, the modern Irbid, by Salmanassar IV., who ascended the Assyrian throne in 727 and besieged Samaria in 724 ff. But since the construction of the phrase leaves it doubtful whether the name Shalman is that of the agent or object of the destruction, and whether, if the agent, he be one of the Assyrian Salmanassars or a Moabite King Salman *c.* 730 B.C., it is impossible to make use of the verse in fixing the date of the Book of Hosea. See further, p. 289. Wellhausen omits.

and Galilee in 734—733. On the contrary, these provinces are still regarded as part of the body politic of Israel.[1] Nor is there any sign that Israel have broken with Assyria; to the last the book represents them as fawning on the Northern Power.[2]

In all probability, then, the Book of Hosea was closed before 734 B.C. The Second Section dates from the years behind that and back to the death of Jeroboam II. about 743, while the First Section, as we saw, reflects the period immediately before the latter.

We come now to the general style of chaps. iv.—xiv. The period, as we have seen, was one of the most broken of all the history of Israel; the political outlook, the temper of the people, were constantly changing. Hosea, who watched these kaleidoscopes, had himself an extraordinarily mobile and vibrant mind. There could be no greater contrast to that fixture of conscience which renders the Book of Amos so simple in argument, so firm in style.[3] It was a leaden plummet which Amos saw Jehovah setting to the structure of Israel's life.[4] But Hosea felt his own heart hanging at the end of the line; and this was a heart that could never be still. Amos is the prophet of law; he sees the

[1] v. 1; vi. 8; xii. 12: cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, 156.

[2] Cf. W. R. Smith, *l.c.*

[3] Cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, 157: Hosea's "language and the movement of his thoughts are far removed from the simplicity and self-control which characterise the prophecy of Amos. Indignation and sorrow, tenderness and severity, faith in the sovereignty of Jehovah's love, and a despairing sense of Israel's infidelity are woven together in a sequence which has no logical plan, but is determined by the battle and alternate victory of contending emotions; and the swift transitions, the fragmentary unbalanced utterance, the half-developed allusions, that make his prophecy so difficult to the commentator, express the agony of this inward conflict."

[4] See above, p. 114.

Divine processes work themselves out, irrespective of the moods and intrigues of the people, with which, after all, he was little familiar. So each of his paragraphs moves steadily forward to a climax, and every climax is Doom —the captivity of the people to Assyria. You can divide his book by these things; it has its periods, strophes and refrains. It marches like the hosts of the Lord of hosts. But Hosea had no such unhampered vision of great laws. He was too familiar with the rapid changes of his fickle people; and his affection for them was too anxious. His style has all the restlessness and irritableness of hunger about it—the hunger of love. Hosea's eyes are never at rest. He seeks, he welcomes, for moments of extraordinary fondness he dwells upon every sign of his people's repentance. But a Divine jealousy succeeds, and he questions the motives of the change. You feel that his love has been overtaken and surprised by his knowledge; and in fact his whole style might be described as a race between the two—a race varying and uncertain up to almost the end. The transitions are very swift. You come upon a passage of exquisite tenderness: the prophet puts the people's penitence in his own words with a sympathy and poetry that are sublime and seem final. But suddenly he remembers how false they are, and there is another light in his eyes. The lustre of their tears dies from his verses, like the dews of a midsummer morning in Ephraim; and all is dry and hard again beneath the brazen sun of his amazement. *What shall I do unto thee, Ephraim? What shall I do unto thee, Judah?* Indeed, this figure of his own is insufficient to express the suddenness with which Hosea lights up some intrigue of the statesmen of the day, or some evil habit of the priests, or

some hidden orgy of the common people. Rather than the sun it is the lightning—the lightning in pursuit of a serpent.

The elusiveness of the style is the greater that many passages do not seem to have been prepared for public delivery. They are more the play of the prophet's mind than his set speech. They are not formally addressed to an audience, and there is no trace in them of oratorical art.

Hence the language of this Second Section of the Book of Hosea is impulsive and abrupt beyond all comparison. There is little rhythm in it, and almost no argument. Few metaphors are elaborated. Even the brief parallelism of Hebrew poetry seems too long for the quick spasms of the writer's heart. "Osee," said Jerome,[1] "commaticus est, et quasi per sententias loquitur." He speaks in little clauses, often broken off; he is impatient even of copulas. And withal he uses a vocabulary full of strange words, which the paucity of parallelism makes much the more difficult.

To this original brokenness and obscurity of the language are due, *first*, the great corruption of the text; *second*, the difficulty of dividing it; *third*, the uncertainty of deciding its genuineness or authenticity.

1. The TEXT of Hosea is one of the most dilapidated in the Old Testament, and in parts beyond possibility of repair. It is probable that glosses were found necessary at an earlier period and to a larger extent than in most other books: there are evident traces of some; yet it is not always possible to disentangle them.[2] The value of the Greek version is curiously mixed. The authors had before them much the same difficulties as

[1] *Præf. in Duod. Prophetas.* [2] Especially in chap. vii.

we have, and they made many more for themselves. Some of their mistranslations are outrageous: they occur not only in obscure passages, where they may be pardoned;[1] but even where there are parallel terms with which the translators show themselves familiar.[2] Sometimes they have translated word by word, without any attempt to give the general sense; and as a whole their version is devoid both of beauty and compactness. Yet not infrequently they supply us with a better reading than the Massoretic text. Occasionally they divide words properly which the latter misdivides.[3] They often give more correctly the easily confused pronominal suffixes;[4] and the copula.[5] And they help us to the true readings of many other words.[6] Here and there an additional clause in the Greek is plethoric, perhaps copied by mistake from a similar verse in the context.[7] All of these will be noticed separately as we reach them. But, even after these and other aids, we shall find that the text not infrequently remains impracticable.

2. As great as the difficulty of reaching a true text

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[1] As in xi. 2 *b*.

[2] This is especially the case in x. 11-13; xi. 4; xiv. 5.

[3] *E.g.* vi. 5 *b*: M.T. מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ אוֹר יֵצֵא, which is nonsense; LXX. מִשְׁפָּטִי כְּאוֹר, *My judgment shall go forth like light.* xi. 2: M.T. מִפְּנֵיהֶם; LXX. מִפָּנַי הֵם.

[4] iv. 4, עַמִּי for עַמְּךָ; 8, נַפְשָׁם for נָפָשׁ—perhaps; 13, צִלָּהּ for צִלָּהּ; v. 2; vi. 2 (possibly); viii. 4, read יִכְרְתוּ; ix. 2; xi. 2, 3; xi. 5, 6, where for לֹא read לוֹ; 10, read לֵךְ...; xii. 9; xiv. 9 *a*, לוֹ for לִי. On the other hand, they are either improbable or quite wrong, as in v. 2 *b*; vi. 2 (but the LXX. may be right here); vii. 1 *b*; xi. 1, 4; xii. 5; xiii. 14, 15 (ter.).

[5] v. 5 (so as to change the tense: *and Judah shall stumble*); xii. 3, etc.

[6] vi. 3; viii. 10, 13; ix. 2; x. 4, 13 *b*, 15 (probably); xii. 2; xiii. 9; xiv. 3. Wrong tense, xii. 11. Cf. also vi. 3.

[7] *E.g.* viii. 13.

in this Second Section of the book is the difficulty of DIVIDING it. Here and there, it is true, the Greek helps us to improve upon the division into chapters and verses of the Hebrew text, which is that of our own English version. Chap. vi. 1-4 ought to follow immediately on to the end of chap. v., with the connecting word *saying*. The last few words of chap. vi. go with the first two of chap. vii., but perhaps both are gloss. The openings of chaps. xi. and xii. are better arranged in the Hebrew than in the Greek. As regards verses we shall have to make several rearrangements.[1] But beyond this more or less conventional division into chapters and verses our confidence ceases. It is impossible to separate the section, long as it is, into subsections, or into oracles, strophes or periods. The reason of this we have already seen, in the turbulence of the period reflected, in the divided interests and abrupt and emotional style of the author, and in the probability that part at least of the book was not prepared for public speaking. The periods and climaxes, the refrains, the catchwords by which we are helped to divide even the confused Second Section of the Book of Amos, are not found in Hosea. Only twice does the exordium of a spoken address occur: at the beginning of the section (chap. iv. 1), and at what is now the opening of the next chapter (v. 1). The phrase *'tis the oracle of Jehovah*, which occurs so periodically in Amos, and thrice in the second chapter of Hosea, is found only once in chaps. iv.—xiv. Again, the obvious climaxes or perorations, of which we found so many in Amos, are very few,[2] and even when they occur the next verses start impulsively from them, without a pause.

[1] Cf. the Hebrew and Greek, of *e.g.*, iv. 10, 11, 12; vi. 9, 10; viii. 5, 6; ix 8, 9.

[2] viii. 13 (14 must be omitted); ix. 17.

In spite of these difficulties, since the section is so long, attempts at division have been made. Ewald distinguished three parts in three different tempers: *First*, iv.—vi. 11 *a*, God's Plaint against His people; *Second*, vi. 11 *b*—ix. 9, Their Punishment; *Third*, ix. 10—xiv. 10, Retrospect of the earlier history—warning and consolation. Driver also divides into three subsections, but differently: *First*, iv.—viii., in which Israel's Guilt predominates; *Second*, ix.—xi. 11, in which the prevailing thought is their Punishment; *Third*, xi. 12—xiv. 10, in which both lines of thought are continued, but followed by a glance at the brighter future.[1] What is common to both these arrangements is the recognition of a certain progress from feelings about Israel's guilt which prevail in the earlier chapters, to a clear vision of the political destruction awaiting them; and finally more hope of repentance in the people, with a vision of the blessed future that must follow upon it. It is, however, more accurate to say that the emphasis of Hosea's prophesying, instead of changing from the Guilt to the Punishment of Israel, changes about the middle of chap. vii. from their Moral Decay to their Political Decay, and that the description of the latter is modified or interrupted by Two Visions of better things: one of Jehovah's early guidance of the people, with a great outbreak of His Love upon them, in chap. xi.; and one of their future Return to Jehovah and restoration in chap. xiv. It is on these features that the division of the following Exposition is arranged.

3. It will be obvious that with a text so corrupt, with a style so broken and incapable of logical division, questions of AUTHENTICITY are raised to a pitch of the

[1] *Introd.* 284.

greatest difficulty. Allusion has been made to the number of glosses which must have been found necessary from even an early period, and of some of which we can discern the proofs.[1] We will deal with these as they occur. But we may here discuss, as a whole, another class of suspected passages—suspected for the same reason that we saw a number in Amos to be, because of their reference to Judah. In the Book of Hosea (chaps. iv.—xiv.) they are twelve in number. Only one of them is favourable (iv. 15): *Though Israel play the harlot, let not Judah sin.* Kuenen[2] argues that this is genuine, on the ground that the peculiar verb *to sin* or *take guilt to oneself* is used several other times in the book,[3] and that the wish expressed is in consonance with what he understands to be Hosea's favourable feeling towards Judah. Yet Hosea nowhere else makes any distinction between Ephraim and Judah in the matter of sin, but condemns both equally; and as iv. 15 f. are to be suspected on other grounds as well, I cannot hold this reference to Judah to be beyond doubt. Nor is the reference in viii. 14 genuine: *And Israel forgat her Maker and built temples, and Judah multiplied fenced cities, but I will send fire on his cities and it shall devour her palaces.* Kuenen[4] refuses to reject the reference to Judah, on the ground that without it the rhythm of the verse is spoiled; but the fact is the whole verse must go. Chap. v. 13 forms a climax, which v. 14 only weakens; the style is not like Hosea's own, and indeed is but an echo of verses of

[1] *E.g.* iv. 15 (?); vi. 11—vii. 1 (?); vii. 4; viii. 2; xii. 6.
[2] *Einl.*, 323.
[3] אִישַׁם, v. 15; x. 2; xiii. 1; xiv. 1.
[4] P. 313.

Amos.[1] Nor can we be quite sure about v. 5 : *Israel and Ephraim shall stumble by their iniquities, and* (LXX.) *stumble also shall Judah with them*; or vi. 10, 11 : *In Bethel I have seen horrors : there playest thou the harlot, Ephraim ; there Israel defiles himself; also Judah . . .* (the rest of the text is impracticable). In both these passages Judah is the awkward third of a parallelism, and is introduced by an *also*, as if an afterthought. Yet the afterthought may be the prophet's own ; for in other passages, to which no doubt attaches, he fully includes Judah in the sinfulness of Israel. Cornill rejects x. 11, *Judah must plough*, but I cannot see on what grounds ; as Kuenen says, it has no appearance of being an intrusion.[2] In xii. 3 Wellhausen reads *Israel* for *Judah*, but the latter is justified if not rendered necessary by the reference to Judah in ver. 1, which Wellhausen admits. Against the other references —v. 10, *The princes of Judah are as removers of boundaries* ; v. 12, *I shall be as the moth to Ephraim, and a worm to the house of Judah* ; v. 13, *And Ephraim saw his disease, and Judah his sore* ; v. 14, *For I am as a roaring lion to Ephraim, and as a young lion to the house of Judah* ; vi. 4, *What shall I do to thee, Ephraim? what shall I do to thee, Judah?*—there are no apparent objections ; and they are generally admitted by critics. As Kuenen says, it would have been surprising if Hosea had made no reference to the sister kingdom. His judgment of her is amply justified by that of her own citizens, Isaiah and Micah.

Other short passages of doubtful authenticity will be treated as we come to them ; but again it may be

[1] viii. 14 is also rejected by Wellhausen and Cornill.

[2] *Loc. cit.*

emphasised that, in a book of such a style as this, certainty on the subject is impossible.

Finally, there may be given here the only notable addition which the Septuagint makes to the Book of Hosea. It occurs in xiii. 4, after *I am Jehovah thy God*: "That made fast the heavens and founded the earth, whose hands founded all the host of the heaven, and I did not show them to thee that thou shouldest follow after them, and I led thee up"—*from the land of Egypt.*

At first this recalls those apostrophes to Jehovah's power which break forth in the Book of Amos; and the resemblance has been taken to prove that they also are late intrusions. But this both obtrudes itself as they do not, and is manifestly of much lower poetical value. See page 203.

We have now our material clearly before us, and may proceed to the more welcome task of tracing our prophet's life, and expounding his teaching.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROBLEM THAT AMOS LEFT

AMOS was a preacher of righteousness almost wholly in its judicial and punitive offices. Exposing the moral conditions of society in his day, emphasising on the one hand its obduracy and on the other the intolerableness of it, he asserted that nothing could avert the inevitable doom—neither Israel's devotion to Jehovah nor Jehovah's interest in Israel. *You alone have I known of all the families of the ground: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.* The visitation was to take place in war and in the captivity of the people. This is practically the whole message of the prophet Amos.

That he added to it the promise of restoration which now closes his book, we have seen to be extremely improbable.[1] Yet even if that promise is his own, Amos does not tell us how the restoration is to be brought about. With wonderful insight and patience he has traced the captivity of Israel to moral causes. But he does not show what moral change in the exiles is to justify their restoration, or by what means such a moral change is to be effected. We are left to infer the conditions and the means of redemption from the principles which Amos enforced while there yet seemed

[1] See above, pp. 193 ff.

time to pray for the doomed people: *Seek the Lord and ye shall live.*[1] According to this, the moral renewal of Israel must precede their restoration; but the prophet seems to make no great effort to effect the renewal. In short Amos illustrates the easily-forgotten truth that a preacher to the conscience is not necessarily a preacher of repentance.

Of the great antitheses between which religion moves, Law and Love, Amos had therefore been the prophet of Law. But we must not imagine that the association of Love with the Deity was strange to him. This could not be to any Israelite who remembered the past of his people—the romance of their origins and early struggles for freedom. Israel had always felt the grace of their God; and, unless we be wrong about the date of the great poem in the end of Deuteronomy, they had lately celebrated that grace in lines of exquisite beauty and tenderness:—

He found him in a desert land,
In a waste and a howling wilderness.
He compassed him about, cared for him,
Kept him as the apple of His eye.
As an eagle stirreth up his nest,
Fluttereth over his young,
Spreadeth his wings, taketh them,
Beareth them up on his pinions—
So Jehovah alone led him.[2]

The patience of the Lord with their waywardness and their stubbornness had been the ethical influence

[1] v. 4.

[2] Deut. xxxii. 10-12: a song probably earlier than the eighth century. But some put it later.

on Israel's life at a time when they had probably neither code of law nor system of doctrine. *Thy gentleness,* as an early Psalmist says for his people, *Thy gentleness hath made me great.*[1] Amos is not unaware of this ancient grace of Jehovah. But he speaks of it in a fashion which shows that he feels it to be exhausted and without hope for his generation. *I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up of your sons for prophets and of your young men for Nazirites.*[2] But this can now only fill the cup of the nation's sin. *You alone have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*[3] Jehovah's ancient Love but strengthens now the justice and the impetus of His Law.

We perceive, then, the problem which Amos left to prophecy. It was not to discover Love in the Deity whom he had so absolutely identified with Law. The Love of God needed no discovery among a people with the Deliverance, the Exodus, the Wilderness and the Gift of the Land in their memories. But the problem was to prove in God so great and new a mercy as was capable of matching that Law, which the abuse of His millennial gentleness now only the more fully justified. There was needed a prophet to arise with as keen a conscience of Law as Amos himself, and yet affirm that Love was greater still; to admit that Israel were doomed, and yet promise their redemption by processes as reasonable and as ethical as those by which the doom had been rendered inevitable. The prophet of Conscience had to be followed by the prophet of Repentance.

[1] Psalm xviii. [2] ii. 10 f. [3] iii. 2.

Such an one was found in Hosea, the son of Be'eri, a citizen and probably a priest of Northern Israel, whose very name, *Salvation*, the synonym of Joshua and of Jesus, breathed the larger hope, which it was his glory to bear to his people. Before we see how for this task Hosea was equipped with the love and sympathy which Amos lacked, let us do two things. Let us appreciate the magnitude of the task itself, set to him first of prophets; and let us remind ourselves that, greatly as he achieved it, the task was not one which could be achieved even by him once for all, but that it presents itself to religion again and again in the course of her development.

For the first of these duties, it is enough to recall how much all subsequent prophecy derives from Hosea. We shall not exaggerate if we say that there is no truth uttered by later prophets about the Divine Grace, which we do not find in germ in him. Isaiah of Jerusalem was a greater statesman and a more powerful writer, but he had not Hosea's tenderness and insight into motive and character. Hosea's marvellous sympathy both with the people and with God is sufficient to foreshadow every grief, every hope, every gospel, which make the Books of Jeremiah and the great Prophet of the Exile exhaustless in their spiritual value for mankind. These others explored the kingdom of God: it was Hosea who took it by storm.[1] He is the first prophet of Grace, Israel's earliest Evangelist; yet with as keen a sense of law, and of the inevitableness of ethical discipline, as Amos himself.

But the task which Hosea accomplished was not one that could be accomplished once for all. The interest

[1] Matt. xi. 12.

of his book is not merely historical. For so often as a generation is shocked out of its old religious ideals, as Amos shocked Israel, by a realism and a discovery of law, which have no respect for ideals, however ancient and however dear to the human heart, but work their own pitiless way to doom inevitable; so often must the Book of Hosea have a practical value for living men. At such a crisis we stand to-day. The older Evangelical assurance, the older Evangelical ideals have to some extent been rendered impossible by the realism to which the sciences, both physical and historical, have most healthily recalled us, and by their wonderful revelation of Law working through nature and society without respect to our creeds and pious hopes. The question presses: Is it still possible to believe in repentance and conversion, still possible to preach the power of God to save, whether the individual or society, from the forces of heredity and of habit? We can at least learn how Hosea mastered the very similar problem which Amos left to him, and how, with a moral realism no less stern than his predecessor and a moral standard every whit as high, he proclaimed Love to be the ultimate element in religion; not only because it moves man to a repentance and God to a redemption more sovereign than any law; but because if neglected or abused, whether as love of man or love of God, it enforces a doom still more inexorable than that required by violated truth or by outraged justice. Love our Saviour, Love our almighty and unfailing Father, but, just because of this, Love our most awful Judge—we turn to the life and the message in which this eternal theme was first unfolded.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL WIFE

Hosea i.—iii.

IT has often been remarked that, unlike the first Doomster of Israel, Israel's first Evangelist was one of themselves, a native and citizen, perhaps even a priest, of the land to which he was sent. This appears even in his treatment of the stage and soil of his ministry. Contrast him in this respect with Amos.

In the Book of Amos we have few glimpses of the scenery of Israel, and these always by flashes of the lightnings of judgment: the towns in drought or earthquake or siege; the vineyards and orchards under locusts or mildew; Carmel itself desolate, or as a hiding-place from God's wrath.

But Hosea's love steals across his whole land like the dew, provoking every separate scent and colour, till all Galilee lies before us, lustrous and fragrant as nowhere else outside the parables of Jesus. The Book of Amos, when it would praise God's works, looks to the stars. But the poetry of Hosea clings about his native soil like its trailing vines. If he appeals to the heavens, it is only that they may speak to the earth, and the earth to the corn and the wine, and the corn and the wine to Jezreel.[1] Even the wild beasts—and Hosea

[1] ii. 23, Heb.

tells us of their cruelty almost as much as Amos—he cannot shut out of the hope of his love: *I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground.*[1] God's love-gifts to His people are corn and wool, flax and oil; while spiritual blessings are figured in the joys of them who sow and reap. With Hosea we feel all the seasons of the Syrian year: early rain and latter rain, the first flush of the young corn, the scent of the vine blossom, the *first ripe fig of the fig-tree in her first season*, the bursting of the lily; the wild vine trailing on the hedge, the field of tares, the beauty of the full olive in sunshine and breeze; the mists and heavy dews of a summer morning in Ephraim, the night winds laden with the air of the mountains, *the scent of Lebanon.*[2] Or it is the dearer human sights in valley and field: the smoke from the chimney, the chaff from the threshing-floor, the doves startled to their towers, the fowler and his net; the breaking up of the fallow ground, the harrowing of the clods, the reapers, the heifer that treadeth out the corn; the team of draught oxen surmounting the steep road, and at the top the kindly driver setting in food to their jaws.[3]

Where, I say, do we find anything like this save in the parables of Jesus? For the love of Hosea was as the love of that greater Galilean: however high, however lonely it soared, it was yet rooted in the common life below, and fed with the unfailing grace of a thousand homely sources.

But just as the Love which first showed itself in the

[1] ii. 20, Heb. [2] vi. 3, 4; vii. 8; ix. 10; xiv. 6, 7, 8.
[3] vii. 11, 12; x. 11; xi. 4, etc.

sunny Parables of Galilee passed onward to Gethsemane and the Cross, so the love of Hosea, that had wakened with the spring lilies and dewy summer mornings of the North, had also, ere his youth was spent, to meet its agony and shame. These came upon the prophet in his home, and in her in whom so loyal and tender a heart had hoped to find his chiefest sanctuary next to God. There are, it is true, some of the ugliest facts of human life about this prophet's experience; but the message is one very suited to our own hearts and times. Let us read this story of the Prodigal Wife as we do that other Galilean tale of the Prodigal Son. There as well as here are harlots; but here as well as there is the clear mirror of the Divine Love. For the Bible never shuns realism when it would expose the exceeding hatefulness of sin or magnify the power of God's love to redeem. To an age which is always treating conjugal infidelity either as a matter of comedy or as a problem of despair, the tale of Hosea and his wife may still become, what it proved to his own generation, a gospel full of love and hope.

The story, and how it led Hosea to understand God's relations to sinful men, is told in the first three chapters of his book. It opens with the very startling sentence: *The beginning of the word of Jehovah to Hosea:—And Jehovah said to Hosea, Go, take thee a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry: for the Land hath committed great harlotry in departing from Jehovah.*[1]

The command was obeyed. *And he went and took Gomer, daughter of Diblaim;*[2] *and she conceived, and bare*

[1] Pregnant construction, *hath committed great harlotry from after Jehovah.*

[2] These personal names do not elsewhere occur. גֹּמֶר; Γομερ.

to him a son. And Jehovah said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little and I shall visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will bring to an end the kingdom of the house of Israel; and it shall be on that day that I shall break the bow of Israel in the Vale of Jezreel—the classic battle-field of Israel.[1] *And she conceived again, and bare a daughter; and He said to him, Call her name Un-Loved,* or *That-never-knew-a-Father's-Pity;*[2] *for I will not again have pity*—such pity as a Father hath—*on the house of Israel, that I should fully forgive them.*[3] *And she weaned Un-Pitied, and conceived, and bare a son. And He said, Call his name*

דִּבְלָיִם; Δεβηλαιμ, B; Δεβηλαειμ, AQ. They have, of course, been interpreted allegorically in the interests of the theory discussed below. גמר has been taken to mean "completion," and interpreted as various derivatives of that root: Jerome, "the perfect one"; Raschi, "that fulfilled all evil"; Kimchi, "fulfilment of punishment"; Calvin, "consumptio," and so on. דבלים has been traced to דֶּבְלָה, Pl. דִּבְלִים, cakes of pressed figs, as if a name had been sought to connect the woman at once with the idol-worship and a rich sweetness; or to an Arabic root, דבל, to press, as if it referred either to the plumpness of the body (cf. Ezek. xvi. 7; so Hitzig) or to the woman's habits. But all these are far-fetched and vain. There is no reason to suppose that either of the two names is symbolic. The alternative (allowed by the language) naturally suggests itself that דבלים is the name of Gomer's birthplace. But there is nothing to prove this. No such place-name occurs elsewhere: one cannot adduce the Diblathaim in Moab (Num. xxxiii. 46 ff.; Jer. xlviii. 2).

[1] *Hist. Geog.*, Chap. XVIII.

[2] לֹא רֻחָמָה, probably 3rd pers. sing. fem. Pual (in Pause cf. Prov. xxviii. 13); literally, *She is not loved* or *pitied.* The word means love as pity: "such pity as a father hath unto his children dear" (Psalm ciii.), or God to a penitent man (Psalm xxviii. 13). The Greek versions alternate between love and pity. LXX. *οὐκ ἠλεημένη διότι οὐ μὴ προσθήσω ἔτι ἐλεῆσαι,* for which the Complutensian has *ἀγαπῆσαι,* the reading followed by Paul (Rom. ix. 25: cf. 1 Peter ii. 10).

[3] Here ver. 7 is to be omitted, as explained above, p. 213.

Not-My-People: for ye are not My people, and I—I am not yours.[1]

It is not surprising that divers interpretations have been put upon this troubled tale. The words which introduce it are so startling that very many have held it to be an allegory, or parable, invented by the prophet to illustrate, by familiar human figures, what was at that period the still difficult conception of the Love of God for sinful men. But to this well-intended argument there are insuperable objections. It implies that Hosea had first awakened to the relations of Jehovah and Israel—He faithful and full of affection, she unfaithful and thankless—and that then, in order to illustrate the relations, he had invented the story. To that we have an adequate reply. In the first place, though it were possible, it is extremely improbable, that such a man should have invented such a tale about his wife, or, if he was unmarried, about himself. But, in the second place, he says expressly that his domestic experience was the *beginning of Jehovah's word to him.* That is, he passed through it first, and only afterwards, with the sympathy and insight thus acquired, he came to appreciate Jehovah's relation to Israel. Finally, the style betrays narrative rather than parable. The simple facts are told; there is an absence of elaboration; there is no effort to make every detail symbolic; the names Gomer and Diblaim are apparently those of real persons; every attempt to attach a symbolic value to them has failed.

She was, therefore, no dream, this woman, but flesh and blood: the sorrow, the despair, the sphinx of the

[1] Do not belong to you; but the *I am*, אהיה, recalls the *I am that I am* of Exodus.

prophet's life; yet a sphinx who in the end yielded her riddle to love.

Accordingly a large number of other interpreters have taken the story throughout as the literal account of actual facts. This is the theory of many of the Latin and Greek Fathers,[1] of many of the Puritans and of Dr. Pusey—by one of those agreements into which, from such opposite schools, all these commentators are not infrequently drawn by their common captivity to the letter of Scripture.[2] When you ask them, How then do you justify that first strange word of God to Hosea,[3] if you take it literally and believe that Hosea was charged to marry a woman of public shame? they answer either that such an evil may be justified by the bare word of God, or that it was well worth the end, the salvation of a lost soul.[4] And indeed this tragedy would be invested with an even greater pathos if it were true that the human hero had passed through a self-sacrifice so unusual, had incurred such a shame for such an end. The interpretation, however, seems forbidden by the essence of the story. Had not Hosea's wife been pure when he married her she could not have served as a type of the Israel whose earliest relations to Jehovah he describes as innocent. And this is confirmed by other features of the book: by the high ideal which Hosea has of marriage, and by that sense of early goodness

[1] Augustine, Ambrose, Theodoret, Cyril Alex. and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

[2] It is interesting to read in parallel the interpretations of Matthew Henry and Dr. Pusey. They are very alike, but the latter has the more delicate taste of his age.

[3] i. 2.

[4] The former is Matthew Henry's; the latter seems to be implied by Pusey.

and early beauty passing away like morning mist, which is so often and so pathetically expressed that we cannot but catch in it the echo of his own experience. As one has said to whom we owe, more than to any other, the exposition of the gospel in Hosea,[1] "The struggle of Hosea's shame and grief when he found his wife unfaithful is altogether inconceivable unless his first love had been pure and full of trust in the purity of its object."

How then are we to reconcile with this the statement of that command to take a wife of the character so frankly described? In this way—and we owe the interpretation to the same lamented scholar.[2] When, some years after his marriage, Hosea at last began to be aware of the character of her whom he had taken to his home, and while he still brooded upon it, God revealed to him why He who knoweth all things from the beginning had suffered His servant to marry such a woman; and Hosea, by a very natural anticipation, in which he is imitated by other prophets,[3] pushed back his own knowledge of God's purpose to the date when that purpose began actually to be fulfilled, the day of his betrothal. This, though he was all unconscious of its fatal future, had been to

[1] Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel.*

[2] Apparently it was W. R. Smith's interpretation which caused Kuenen to give up the allegorical theory.

[3] Two instances are usually quoted. The one is Isaiah vi., where most are agreed that what Isaiah has stated there as his inaugural vision is not only what happened in the earliest moments of his prophetic life, but this spelt out and emphasised by his experience since. See *Isaiah I.–XXXIX.* (Exp. Bible), pp. 57 f. The other instance is Jeremiah xxxii. 8, where the prophet tells us that he became convinced that the Lord spoke to him on a certain occasion only after a subsequent event proved this to be the case.

Hosea the beginning of the word of the Lord. On that uncertain voyage he had sailed with sealed orders.

Now this is true to nature, and may be matched from our own experience. "The beginning of God's word" to any of us—where does it lie? Does it lie in the first time the meaning of our life became articulate, and we were able to utter it to others? Ah no; it always lies far behind that, in facts and in relationships, of the Divine meaning of which we are at the time unconscious, though now we know. How familiar this is in respect to the sorrows and adversities of life: dumb, deadening things that fall on us at the time with no more voice than clods falling on coffins of dead men, we have been able to read them afterwards as the clear call of God to our souls. But what we thus so readily admit about the sorrows of life may be equally true of any of those relations which we enter with light and unawed hearts, conscious only of the novelty and the joy of them. It is most true of the love which meets a man as it met Hosea in his opening manhood.

How long Hosea took to discover his shame he indicates by a few hints which he suffers to break from the delicate reserve of his story. He calls the first child his own; and the boy's name, though ominous of the nation's fate, has no trace of shame upon it. Hosea's Jezreel was as Isaiah's Shear-Jashub or Maher-shalal-hash-baz. But Hosea does not claim the second child; and in the name of this little lass, Lo-Ruhamah, *she-that-never-knew-a-father's-love*, orphan not by death but by her mother's sin, we find proof of the prophet's awakening to the tragedy of his home. Nor does he own the third child, named *Not-my-people*, that could

also mean *No-kin-of-mine*. The three births must have taken at least six years;[1] and once at least, but probably oftener, Hosea had forgiven the woman, and till the sixth year she stayed in his house. Then either he put her from him, or shè went her own way. She sold herself for money, and finally drifted, like all of her class, into slavery.[2]

Such were the facts of Hosea's grief, and we have now to attempt to understand how that grief became his gospel. We may regard the stages of the process as two: first, when he was led to feel that his sorrow was the sorrow of the whole nation; and, second, when he comprehended that it was of similar kind to the sorrow of God Himself.

While Hosea brooded upon his pain one of the first things he would remember would be the fact, which he so frequently illustrates, that the case of his home was not singular, but common and characteristic of his day. Take the evidence of his book, and there must have been in Israel many such wives as his own. He describes their sin as the besetting sin of the nation, and the plague of Israel's life. But to lose your own sorrow in the vaster sense of national trouble—that is the first consciousness of a duty and a mission. In the analogous vice of intemperance among ourselves we have seen the same experience operate again and again. How many a man has joined the public warfare against that sin, because he was aroused to its national consequences by the ruin it had brought to his own home! And one remembers from recent years a more illustrious instance, where a domestic grief—

[1] An Eastern woman seldom weans her child before the end of its second year. [2] iii. 2.

it is true of a very different kind—became not dissimilarly the opening of a great career of service to the people :—

"I was in Leamington, and Mr. Cobden called on me. I was then in the depths of grief—I may almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called on me as his friend, and addressed me, as you may suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said: 'There are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Laws are repealed.'"[1]

Not dissimilarly was Hosea's pain overwhelmed by the pain of his people. He remembered that there were in Israel thousands of homes like his own. Anguish gave way to sympathy. The mystery became the stimulus to a mission.

But, again, Hosea traces this sin of his day to the worship of strange gods. He tells the fathers of Israel, for instance, that they need not be surprised at the corruption of their wives and daughters when they themselves bring home from the heathen rites the infection of light views of love.[2] That is to say, the many sins against human love in Israel, the wrong done to his own heart in his own home, Hosea connects with the wrong done to the Love of God, by His people's desertion of Him for foreign and impure rites. Hosea's own sorrow thus became a key to the sorrow of God. Had he loved this woman, cherished and

[1] From a speech by John Bright.

[2] iv. 13, 14.

honoured her, borne with and forgiven her, only to find at the last his love spurned and hers turned to sinful men: so also had the Love of God been treated by His chosen people, and they had fallen to the loose worship of idols.

Hosea was the more naturally led to compare his relations to his wife with Jehovah's to Israel, by certain religious beliefs current among the Semitic peoples. It was common to nearly all Semitic religions to express the union of a god with his land or with his people by the figure of marriage. The title which Hosea so often applies to the heathen deities, Baʿal, meant originally not "lord" of his worshippers, but "possessor" and endower of his land, its husband and fertiliser. A fertile land was "a land of Baʿal," or "Beʿulah," that is, "possessed" or "blessed by a Baʿal."[1] Under the fertility was counted not only the increase of field and flock, but the human increase as well; and thus a nation could speak of themselves as the children of the Land, their mother, and of her Baʿal, their father.[2] When Hosea, then, called Jehovah the husband of Israel, it was not an entirely new symbol which he invented. Up to his time, however, the marriage of Heaven and Earth, of a god and his people, seems to have been conceived in a physical form which ever tended to become more gross; and was expressed, as Hosea points out, by rites of a sensual and debasing nature, with the most disastrous effects on the domestic morals of the people. By an inspiration, whose ethical character is very conspicuous, Hosea breaks the physical connection altogether. Jehovah's Bride is not the

[1] Cf. the spiritual use of the term, Isa. lxii. 4.

[2] For proof and exposition of all this see Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 92 ff.

Land, but the People, and His marriage with her is conceived wholly as a moral relation. Not that He has no connection with the physical fruits of the land: corn, wine, oil, wool and flax. But these are represented only as the signs and ornaments of the marriage, love-gifts from the husband to the wife.[1] The marriage itself is purely moral: *I will betroth her to Me in righteousness and justice, in leal love and tender mercies.*[2] From her in return are demanded faithfulness and growing knowledge of her Lord.

It is the re-creation of an Idea. Slain and made carrion by the heathen religions, the figure is restored to life by Hosea. And this is a life everlasting. Prophet and apostle, the Israel of Jehovah, the Church of Christ, have alike found in Hosea's figure an unfailing significance and charm. Here we cannot trace the history of the figure; but at least we ought to emphasise the creative power which its recovery to life proves to have been inherent in prophecy. This is one of those triumphs of which the God of Israel said: *Behold, I make all things new.*[3]

Having dug his figure from the mire and set it upon the rock, Hosea sends it on its way with all boldness. If Jehovah be thus the husband of Israel, *her first husband, the husband of her youth*, then all her pursuit of the Baʿalim is unfaithfulness to her marriage vows. But she is worse than an adulteress; she is a harlot. She has fallen for gifts. Here the historical facts wonder-

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[1] ii. 8.

[2] So best is rendered חֶסֶד, ḥesedh, which means always not merely an affection, "lovingkindness," as our version puts it, but a relation loyally observed.

[3] An expansion of this will be found in the present writer's *Isaiah XL.—LXVI.* (Expositor's Bible Series), pp. 398 ff.

fully assisted the prophet's metaphor. It was a fact that Israel and Jehovah were first wedded in the wilderness upon conditions, which by the very circumstances of desert life could have little or no reference to the fertility of the earth, but were purely personal and moral. And it was also a fact that Israel's declension from Jehovah came after her settlement in Canaan, and was due to her discovery of other deities, in possession of the soil, and adored by the natives as the dispensers of its fertility. Israel fell under these superstitions, and, although she still formally acknowledged her bond to Jehovah, yet in order to get her fields blessed and her flocks made fertile, her orchards protected from blight and her fleeces from scab, she went after the local Ba'alim.[1] With bitter scorn Hosea points out that there was no true love in this: it was the mercenariness of a harlot, selling herself for gifts.[2] And it had the usual results. The children whom Israel bore were not her husband's.[3] The new generation in Israel grew up in ignorance of Jehovah, with characters and lives strange to His Spirit. They were Lo-Ruhamah: He could not feel towards them such pity as a father hath.[4] They were Lo-Ammi: not at all His people. All was in exact parallel to Hosea's own experience with his wife; and only the real pain of that experience could have made the man brave enough to use it as a figure of his God's treatment by Israel.

Following out the human analogy, the next step should have been for Jehovah to divorce His erring spouse. But Jehovah reveals to the prophet that this is not His way. For He is *God and not man, the Holy*

[1] ii. 13. [2] ii. 5, 13. [3] ii. 5. [4] See above, p. 235.

One in the midst of thee. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I surrender thee, O Israel? My heart is turned within Me, My compassions are kindled together!

Jehovah will seek, find and bring back the wanderer. Yet the process shall not be easy. The gospel which Hosea here preaches is matched in its great tenderness by its full recognition of the ethical requirements of the case. Israel may not be restored without repentance, and cannot repent without disillusion and chastisement. God will therefore show her that her lovers, the Baʿalim, are unable to assure to her the gifts for which she followed them. These are His corn, His wine, His wool and His flax, and He will take them away for a time. Nay more, as if mere drought and blight might still be regarded as some Baʿal's work, He who has always manifested Himself by great historic deeds will do so again. He will remove herself from the land, and leave it a waste and a desolation. The whole passage runs as follows, introduced by the initial *Therefore* of judgment:—

Therefore, behold, I am going to hedge[1] *up her*[2] *way with thorns, and build her*[3] *a wall, so that she find not her paths. And she shall pursue her paramours and shall not come upon them, seek them and shall not find them; and she shall say, Let me go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now. She knew not, then, that it was I* who *gave her the corn and the wine and the oil; yea, silver I heaped upon her and*

[1] The participle Qal, used by God of Himself in His proclamations of grace or of punishment, has in this passage (cf. ver. 16) and elsewhere (especially in Deuteronomy) the force of an immediate future.

[2] So LXX.; Mass. Text, *thy*.

[3] The reading גְּדֵרָהּ is more probable than גְּדֵרָה.

gold—they worked it up for the Ba'al![1] Israel had deserted the religion that was historical and moral for the religion that was physical. But the historical religion was the physical one. Jehovah who had brought Israel to the land was also the God of the Land. He would prove this by taking away its blessings. *Therefore I will turn and take away My corn in its time and My wine in its season, and I will withdraw My wool and My flax that should have covered her nakedness. And now*—the other initial of judgment—*I will lay bare her shame to the eyes of her lovers, and no man shall rescue her from My hand. And I will make an end of all her joyaunce, her pilgrimages, her New-Moons and her Sabbaths, with every festival; and I will destroy her vines and her figs of which she said, "They are a gift, mine own, which my lovers gave me," and I will turn them to jungle and the wild beast shall devour them. So shall I visit upon her the days of the Ba'alim, when she used to offer incense to them, and decked herself with her rings and her jewels and went after her paramours, but Me she forgat—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* All this implies something more than such natural disasters as those in which Amos saw the first chastisements of the Lord. Each of the verses suggests, not only a devastation of the land by war,[2] but the removal of the people into captivity. Evidently, therefore, Hosea, writing about

[1] Or *they made it into a Ba'al* image. So Ew., Hitz., Nowack. But Wellhausen omits the clause.

[2] Wellhausen thinks that up to ver. 14 only physical calamities are meant, but the הצלתו of ver. 11, as well as others of the terms used, imply not the blighting of crops before their season, but the carrying of them away in their season, when they had fully ripened, by invaders. The cessation of all worship points to the removal of the people from their land, which is also implied, of course, by the promise that they shall be sown again in ver. 23.

745, had in view a speedy invasion by Assyria, an invasion which was always followed up by the exile of the people subdued.

This is next described, with all plainness, under the figure of Israel's early wanderings in the wilderness, but is emphasised as happening only for the end of the people's penitence and restoration. The new hope is so melodious that it carries the language into metre.

Therefore, lo! I am to woo her, and I will bring her to the wilderness,
And I will speak home to her heart.
And from there I will give to her her vineyards,
And the Valley of Achor for a doorway of hope.
And there she shall answer Me *as in the days of her youth,*
And as the day when she came up from the land of Miṣraim.

To us the terms of this passage may seem formal and theological. But to every Israelite some of these terms must have brought back the days of his own wooing. *I will speak home to her heart* is a forcible expression, like the German "an das Herz" or the sweet Scottish "it cam' up roond my heart," and was used in Israel as from man to woman when he won her.[1] But the other terms have an equal charm. The prophet, of course, does not mean that Israel shall be literally taken back to the desert. But he describes her coming Exile under that ancient figure, in order to surround her penitence with the associations of her innocency and her youth. By the grace of God,

[1] Cf. Isa. xl. 1 : which to the same exiled Israel is the fulfilment of the promise made by Hosea. See *Isaiah XL.—LXVI.* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 75 ff.

everything shall begin again as at first. The old terms *wilderness, the giving of vineyards, Valley of Achor*, are, as it were, the wedding ring restored.

As a result of all this (whether the words be by Hosea or another),[1]

It shall be in that day—'tis Jehovah's oracle—that thou shalt call Me, My husband,
And thou shalt not again call Me, My Ba'al:
For I will take away the names of the Ba'alim from her mouth,
And they shall no more be remembered by their names.

There follows a picture of the ideal future, in which—how unlike the vision that now closes the Book of Amos!—moral and spiritual beauty, the peace of the land and the redemption of the people, are wonderfully mingled together, in a style so characteristic of Hosea's heart. It is hard to tell where the rhythmical prose passes into actual metre.

And I will make for them a covenant in that day with the wild beasts, and with the birds of the heavens, and with the creeping things of the ground; and the bow and the sword and battle will I break from the land, and I will make you to dwell in safety. And I will betroth thee to Me for ever, and I will betroth thee to Me in righteousness and in justice, in leal love and in tender mercies; and I will betroth thee to Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know Jehovah.

And it shall be on that day I will speak—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—I will speak to the heavens, and they shall speak to the earth; and the earth shall speak to the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall speak to Jezreel, the *scattered like seed* across many lands; *but I will sow*

[1] Wellhausen calls ver. 18 a gloss to ver. 19.

him[1] *for Myself in the land: and I will have a father's pity upon Un-Pitied; and to Not-My-People* I will say, *My people thou art! and he shall say, My God!*[2]

The circle is thus completed on the terms from which we started. The three names which Hosea gave to the children, evil omens of Israel's fate, are reversed, and the people restored to the favour and love of their God.

We might expect this glory to form the culmination of the prophecy. What fuller prospect could be imagined than that we see in the close of the second chapter? With a wonderful grace, however, the prophecy turns back from this sure vision of the restoration of the people as a whole, to pick up again the individual from whom it had started, and whose unclean rag of a life had fluttered out of sight before the national fortunes sweeping in upon the scene. This was needed to crown the story—this return to the individual.

And Jehovah said unto me, Once more go, love a wife that is loved of a paramour and is an adulteress,[3] *as Jehovah loveth the children of Israel,* the *while they are turning to other gods, and love raisin-cakes*—probably

[1] Massoretic Text, *her.*

[2] It is at this point, if at any, that i. 10, 11, ii. 1 (Eng., but ii. 1-3 Heb.) ought to come in. It will be observed, however, that even here they are superfluous: *And the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor counted; and it shall be in the place where it was said to them, No People of Mine are ye! it shall be said to them, Sons of the Living God! And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land: for great is the day of Jezreel. Say unto your brothers, My People, and to your sisters* (LXX. *sister*), *She-is-Pitied.* On the whole passage see above, p. 213.

[3] Or *that is loved of her husband though an adulteress.*

some element in the feasts of the gods of the land, the givers of the grape. *Then I bought her to me for fifteen* pieces *of silver and a homer of barley and a lethech of wine.*[1] *And I said to her, For many days shalt thou abide for me alone; thou shalt not play the harlot, thou shalt not be for any husband; and I for my part also shall be so towards thee. For the days are many that the children of Israel shall abide without a king and without a prince, without sacrifice and without maççebah, and without ephod and teraphim.*[2] *Afterwards the children of Israel shall turn and seek Jehovah their God and David their king, and shall be in awe of Jehovah and towards His goodness in the end of the days.*[3]

Do not let us miss the fact that the story of the wife's restoration follows that of Israel's, although the story of the wife's unfaithfulness had come before that of Israel's apostasy. For this order means that, while the prophet's private pain preceded his sympathy with God's pain, it was not he who set God, but God who set him, the example of forgiveness. The man learned the God's sorrow out of his own sorrow; but conversely he was taught to forgive and redeem his wife only by seeing God forgive and redeem the people. In other words, the Divine was suggested by the human pain; yet the Divine Grace was not started by any previous human grace, but, on the contrary, was itself the precedent and origin of the latter. This is in harmony with all Hosea's teaching. God forgives because *He is God and not man.*[4] Our pain with those we love helps

[1] So LXX. The homer was eight bushels. The lethech is a measure not elsewhere mentioned.

[2] On these see above, Introduction, Chap. III., p. 38.

[3] On the text see above, p. 214.

[4] xi. 9.

us to understand God's pain; but it is not our love that leads us to believe in His love. On the contrary, all human grace is but the reflex of the Divine. So St. Paul: *Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* So St. John: *We love Him*, and one another, *because He first loved us.*

But this return from the nation to the individual has another interest. Gomer's redemption is not the mere formal completion of the parallel between her and her people. It is, as the story says, an impulse of the Divine Love, recognised even then in Israel as seeking the individual. He who followed Hagar into the wilderness, who met Jacob at Bethel and forgat not the slave Joseph in prison,[1] remembers also Hosea's wife. His love is not satisfied with His Nation-Bride: He remembers this single outcast. It is the Shepherd leaving the ninety-and-nine in the fold to seek the one lost sheep.

For Hosea himself his home could never be the same as it was at the first. *And I said to her, For many days shalt thou abide, as far as I am concerned, alone. Thou shalt not play the harlot. Thou shalt not be for a husband: and I on my side also shall be so towards thee.* Discipline was needed there; and abroad the nation's troubles called the prophet to an anguish and a toil which left no room for the sweet love or hope of his youth. He steps at once to his hard warfare for his people; and through the rest of his book we never again hear him speak of home, or of children, or of

[1] As the stories all written down before this had made familiar to Israel.

wife. So Arthur passed from Guinevere to his last battle for his land:—

"Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?

* * * * *

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine; . . .
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinned; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
'I loathe thee'; yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband, not a smaller soul. . . .
Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow."

CHAPTER XV

THE THICK NIGHT OF ISRAEL

HOSEA iv.—xiv.

IT was indeed a "thick night" into which this Arthur of Israel stepped from his shattered home. The mists drive across Hosea's long agony with his people, and what we see, we see blurred and broken. There is stumbling and clashing; crowds in drift; confused rallies; gangs of assassins breaking across the highways; doors opening upon lurid interiors full of drunken riot. Voices, which other voices mock, cry for a dawn that never comes. God Himself is Laughter, Lightning, a Lion, a Gnawing Worm. Only one clear note breaks over the confusion—the trumpet summoning to war.

Take courage, O great heart! Not thus shall it always be! There wait thee, before the end, of open Visions at least two—one of Memory and one of Hope, one of Childhood and one of Spring. Past this night, past the swamp and jungle of these fetid years, thou shalt see thy land in her beauty, and God shall look on the face of His Bride.

Chaps. iv.—xiv. are almost indivisible. The two Visions just mentioned, chaps. xi. and xiv. 3-9, may

be detached by virtue of contributing the only strains of gospel which rise victorious above the Lord's controversy with His people and the troubled story of their sins. All the rest is the noise of a nation falling to pieces, the crumbling of a splendid past. And as decay has no climax and ruin no rhythm, so we may understand why it is impossible to divide with any certainty Hosea's record of Israel's fall. Some arrangement we must attempt, but it is more or less artificial, and to be undertaken for the sake of our own minds, that cannot grasp so great a collapse all at once. Chap. iv. has a certain unity, and is followed by a new exordium, but as it forms only the theme of which the subsequent chapters are variations, we may take it with them as far as chap. vii., ver. 7; after which there is a slight transition from the moral signs of Israel's dissolution to the political—although Hosea still combines the religious offence of idolatry with the anarchy of the land. These form the chief interest to the end of chap. x. Then breaks the bright Vision of the Past, chap. xi., the temporary victory of the Gospel of the Prophet over his Curse. In chaps. xii.—xiv. 2 we are plunged into the latter once more, and reach in xiv. 3 ff. the second bright Vision, the Vision of the Future. To each of these phases of Israel's Thick Night—we can hardly call them Sections—we may devote a chapter of simple exposition, adding three chapters more of detailed examination of the main doctrines we shall have encountered on our way—the Knowledge of God, Repentance, and the Sin against Love.

CHAPTER XVI

A PEOPLE IN DECAY: I. MORALLY

Hosea iv.—vii. 7.

PURSUING the plan laid down in the last chapter, we now take the section of Hosea's discourse which lies between chap. iv. 1 and chap. vii. 7. Chap. iv. is the only really separable bit of it; but there are also slight breaks at v. 15 and vii. 2. So we may attempt a division into four periods: 1. Chap. iv., which states God's general charge against the people; 2. Chap. v. 1-14, which discusses the priests and princes; 3. Chaps. v. 15—vii. 2, which abjures the people's attempts at repentance; and 4. Chap. vii. 3-7, which is a lurid spectacle of the drunken and profligate court. All these give symptoms of the moral decay of the people,—the family destroyed by impurity, and society by theft and murder; the corruption of the spiritual guides of the people; the debauchery of the nobles; the sympathy of the throne with evil,—with the despairing judgment that such a people are incapable even of repentance. The keynotes are these: *No troth, leal love, nor knowledge of God in the land. Priest and Prophet stumble. Ephraim and Judah stumble. I am as the moth to Ephraim. What can I make of thee, Ephraim? When I would heal them, their guilt is only the more exposed.* Morally, Israel is

rotten. The prophet, of course, cannot help adding signs of their political incoherence. But these he deals with more especially in the part of his discourse which follows chap. vii. 7.

1. The Lord's Quarrel with Israel.

Hosea iv.

Hear the word of Jehovah, sons of Israel![1] *Jehovah hath a quarrel with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no troth nor leal love nor knowledge of God in the land. Perjury*[2] *and murder and theft and adultery!*[3] *They break out, and blood strikes upon blood.*

That stable and well-furnished life, across which, while it was still noon, Amos hurled his alarms—how quickly it has broken up! If there be still *ease in Zion*, there is no more *security in Samaria*.[4] The great Jeroboam is dead, and society, which in the East depends so much on the individual, is loose and falling to pieces. The sins which are exposed by Amos were those that lurked beneath a still strong government, but Hosea adds outbreaks which set all order at defiance. Later we shall find him describing housebreaking, highway robbery and assassination. *Therefore doth the land wither, and every one of her denizens languisheth, even to the beast of the field and the fowl of the heaven; yea, even the fish of the sea are swept up* in the universal sickness of man and nature: for Hosea feels, like Amos, the liability of nature to the curse upon sin.

[1] כִּי formally introduces the charge.

[2] Lit. *swearing and falsehood.*

[3] Ninth, sixth, eighth and seventh of the Decalogue.

[4] Amos vi. 1.

Yet the guilt is not that of the whole people, but of their religious guides. *Let none find fault and none upbraid, for My people are but as their priestlings.*[1] *O Priest, thou hast stumbled to-day: and stumble to-night shall the prophet with thee.* One order of the nation's ministers goes staggering after the other! *And I will destroy thy Mother,* presumably the Nation herself. *Perished are My people for lack of knowledge.* But how? By the sin of their teachers. *Because thou,* O Priest, *hast rejected knowledge, I reject thee from being priest to Me; and as thou hast forgotten the Torah of thy God, I forget thy children*[2]*—I on My side. As many as they be, so many have sinned against Me.* Every jack-priest of them is culpable. *They have turned*[3] *their glory into shame. They feed on the sin of My people, and to the guilt of these lift up their appetite!* The more the people sin, the more merrily thrive the priests by fines and sin-offerings. They live upon the vice of the day,

[1] iv. 4. According to the excellent emendation of Beck (quoted by Wünsche, p. 142), who instead of ועמכמריב proposes ועמי כמריו, for the first word of which there is support in the LXX. ὁ λαός μου. The second word, כמר, is used for priest only in a bad sense by Hosea himself, x. 5, and in 2 Kings xxiii. 5 of the calf-worship and in Zech. i. 4 of the Baal priesthood. As Wellhausen remarks, this emendation restores sense to a passage that had none before. "Ver. 4 cannot be directed against the people, but must rather furnish the connection for ver. 5, and effect the transference from the reproof of the people (vv. 1-3) to the reproof of the priests (5 ff.)." The letters יכהן which are left over in ver. 4 by the emendation are then justly improved by Wellhausen (following Zunz) into the vocative הכהן and taken with the following verse.

[2] The application seems to swerve here. *Thy children* would seem to imply that, for this clause at least, the whole people, and not the priests only, were addressed. But Robertson Smith takes *thy mother* as equivalent, not to the nation, but to the priesthood.

[3] A reading current among Jewish writers and adopted by Geiger, *Urschrift,* 316.

and have a vested interest in its crimes. English Langland said the same thing of the friars of his time. The contention is obvious. The priests have given themselves wholly to the ritual; they have forgotten that their office is an intellectual and moral one. We shall return to this when treating of Hosea's doctrine of knowledge and its responsibilities. Priesthood, let us only remember, priesthood is an intellectual trust.

Thus it comes to be—like people like priest: they also have fallen under the ritual, doing from lust what the priests do from greed. *But I will visit upon them their ways, and their deeds will I requite to them. For they*—those *shall eat and not be satisfied,* these *shall play the harlot and have no increase, because they have left off heeding Jehovah.* This absorption in ritual at the expense of the moral and intellectual elements of religion has insensibly led them over into idolatry, with all its unchaste and drunken services. *Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the brains!*[1] The result is seen in the stupidity with which they consult their stocks for guidance. *My people! of its bit of wood it asketh counsel, and its staff telleth to it* the oracle! *For a spirit of harlotry hath led them astray, and they have played the harlot from their God. Upon the headlands of the hills they sacrifice, and on the heights offer incense, under oak or poplar or terebinth, for the shade of them is pleasant.* On *headlands,* not summits, for here no trees grow; and the altar was generally built under a tree and near water on some promontory, from which the flight of birds or of clouds might be watched.

[1] Heb. *the heart,* which ancient Israel conceived as the seat of the intellect.

Wherefore—because of this your frequenting of the heathen shrines—*your daughters play the harlot and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. I will not come with punishment upon your daughters because they play the harlot, nor upon your daughters-in-law because they commit adultery.* Why? For *they themselves,* the fathers of Israel—or does he still mean the priests?—*go aside with the harlots and sacrifice with the common women of the shrines!* It is vain for the men of a nation to practise impurity, and fancy that nevertheless they can keep their womankind chaste. *So the stupid people fall to ruin!*

(*Though thou play the harlot, Israel, let not Judah bring guilt on herself. And come not to Gilgal, and go not up to Beth-Aven, and take not your oath* at the Well-of-the-Oath, Beer-Sheba,[1] *By the life of Jehovah!* This obvious parenthesis may be either by Hosea or a later writer; the latter is more probable.[2])

Yea, like a wild heifer Israel has gone wild. How now can Jehovah feed them like a lamb in a broad meadow? To treat this clause interrogatively is the only way to get sense out of it.[3] *Wedded to idols is Ephraim: leave him alone.* The participle means *mated* or *leagued.* The corresponding noun is used of a wife as the *mate* of her husband [4] and of an idolater as the *mate* of his idols.[5] The expression is doubly appropriate here, since Hosea used marriage as the figure of the relation of a deity to his worshippers. *Leave him alone*—he must go from bad to worse. *Their drunkenness over, they take to harlotry: her rulers have*

[1] Wellhausen thinks this third place-name (cf. Amos v. 5) has been dropped. It certainly seems to be understood.

[2] But see above, p. 224.

[3] So all critics since Hitzig.

[4] Mal. ii. 4.

[5] Isa. xliv. 11.

fallen in love with shame, or *they love shame more than their pride*.[1] But in spite of all their servile worship the Assyrian tempest shall sweep them away in its trail. *A wind hath wrapt them up in her skirts; and they shall be put to shame by their sacrifices.*

This brings the passage to such a climax as Amos loved to crown his periods. And the opening of the next chapter offers a new exordium.

2. Priests and Princes Fail.

Hosea v. 1-14.

The line followed in this paragraph is almost parallel to that of chap. iv., running out to a prospect of invasion. But the charge is directed solely against the chiefs of the people, and the strictures of chap. vii. 7 ff. upon the political folly of the rulers are anticipated.

Hear this, O Priests, and hearken, House of Israel, and, House of the King, give ear. For on you is the sentence! You, who have hitherto been the judges, this time shall be judged.

A snare have ye become at Mizpeh, and a net spread out upon Tabor, and a pit have they made deep upon Shittim;[2] *but I shall be the scourge of them all. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from Me—for now hast thou played the harlot, Ephraim, Israel is defiled.* The worship on the high places, whether nominally of

[1] The verse is very uncertain. LXX. read a different and a fuller text from *Ephraim* in the previous verse to *harlotry* in this: "Ephraim hath set up for himself stumbling-blocks and chosen Canaanites." In the first of alternate readings of the latter half of the verse omit הבו as probably a repetition of the end of the preceding word; the second alternative is adapted from LXX., which for מגיניה must have read מגאונה.

[2] So by slightly altering the consonants. But the text is uncertain.

Jehovah or not, was sheer service of Baʿalim. It was in the interest both of the priesthood and of the rulers to multiply these sanctuaries, but they were only traps for the people. *Their deeds will not let them return to their God; for a harlot spirit is in their midst, and Jehovah,* for all their oaths by Him, *they have not known. But the pride of Israel shall testify to his face; and Israel and Ephraim shall stumble by their guilt —stumble also shall Judah with them.* By Israel's pride many understand God. But the term is used too opprobriously by Amos to allow us to agree to this. The phrase must mean that Israel's arrogance, or her proud prosperity, by the wounds which it feels in this time of national decay, shall itself testify against the people—a profound ethical symptom to which we shall return when treating of Repentance.[1] Yet the verse may be rendered in harmony with the context*: the pride of Israel shall be humbled to his face. With their sheep and their cattle they go about to seek Jehovah, and shall not find* Him; *He hath drawn off from them. They have been unfaithful to Jehovah, for they have begotten*

[1] *Note on the Pride of Israel.*—גאון means *grandeur*, and is (1) so used of Jehovah's majesty (Micah v. 3; Isa. ii. 10, 19, 21; xxiv. 14), and (2) of the greatness of human powers (Zech. x. 11; Ezek. xxxii. 12). In Psalm xlvii. 5 it is parallel to the land of Israel (cf. Nahum ii. 3). (3) In a grosser sense the word is used of the rank vegetation of Jordan (Eng. wrongly *swelling*) (Jer. xii. 5; Zech. xi. 3: cf. Job xxxviii. 11). It would appear to be this grosser sense of *rankness arrogance*, in which Amos vi. 8 takes it as parallel to *the palaces of Israel* which *Jehovah loathes and will destroy.* In Amos viii. 7 the phrase may be used in scorn; yet some take it even there of God Himself (Buhl, last ed. of Gesenius' *Lexicon*).

Now in Hosea it occurs twice in the phrase given above—וענה גאון ישראל בפניו (v. 5, vii. 10). LXX., Targum and some Jewish exegetes take ענה as a ל״י verb, *to be humbled*, and this suits both contexts. But the word בפניו, *to his face* almost compels us to

strange children. A generation has grown up who are not His. *Now may a month devour them with their portions!* Any month may bring the swift invader. Hark! the alarum of war! How it reaches to the back of the land!

> *Blow the trumpet in Gibeah, the clarion in Ramah;*
> *Raise the slogan, Beth-Aven: "After thee, Benjamin!"* [1]

Ephraim shall become desolation in the day of rebuke! Among the tribes of Israel I have made known what is certain!

At this point, ver. 10, the discourse swerves from the religious to the political leaders of Israel; but as the princes were included with the priests in the exordium (ver. 1), we can hardly count this a new oracle.[2]

The princes of Judah are like landmark-removers—commonest of cheats in Israel—*upon them will I pour out My wrath like water. Ephraim is oppressed, crushed is* his *right, for he wilfully went after vanity.*[3] *And I am as the moth to Ephraim, and as rottenness to the house of*

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take ענה as a ל״י verb, *to witness against* (cf. Job xvi. 8; Jer. xiv. 7). Hence Wellhausen renders "With his arrogance Israel witnesseth against himself," and confirms the plaint of Jehovah—the arrogance being the trust in the ritual and the feeling of no need to turn from that and repent (cf. vii. 10). Orelli quotes Amos vi. 8 and Nahum ii. 3, and says injustice cleaves to all Israel's splendour, so it testifies against him.

But the context, which in both cases speaks of Israel's gradual decay, demands rather the interpretation that Israel's material grandeur shows unmistakable signs of breaking down. For the ethical development of this interpretation, see below, pp. 337 f.

[1] Probably the ancient war-cry of the clan. Cf. Judg. v. 14.

[2] Yet ver. 9 goes with ver. 8 (so Wellhausen), and not with ver. 10 (so Ewald).

[3] For צו read שוא.

Judah. Both kingdoms have begun to fall to pieces, for by this time Uzziah of Judah also is dead, and the weak politicians are in charge whom Isaiah satirised. *And Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sore; and Ephraim went to Asshur and*[1] *sent to King Jareb—King Combative, King Pick-Quarrel,*[2] a nickname for the Assyrian monarch. The verse probably refers to the tribute which Menahem sent to Assyria in 738. If so, then Israel has drifted full five years into her "thick night." *But He cannot heal you, nor dry up your sore. For I,* Myself, *am like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, I rend and go My way; I carry off and there is none to deliver.* It is the same truth which Isaiah expressed with even greater grimness.[3] God Himself is His people's sore; and not all their statecraft nor alliances may heal what He inflicts. Priests and Princes, then, have alike failed. A greater failure is to follow.

3. Repentance Fails.

Hosea v. 15—vii. 2.

Seeing that their leaders are so helpless, and feeling their wounds, the people may themselves turn to God for healing, but that will be with a repentance so shallow as also to be futile. They have no conviction of sin, nor appreciation of how deeply their evils have eaten.

This too facile repentance is expressed in a prayer which the Christian Church has paraphrased into one

[1] Wellhausen inserts *Judah,* with that desire to complete a parallel which seems to me to be overdone by so many critics. If Judah be inserted we should need to bring the date of these verses down to the reign of Ahaz in 734.

[2] Guthe: "King Fighting-Cock."

[3] See *Isaiah I.—XXXIX.* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 242 ff.

of its most beautiful hymns of conversion. Yet the introduction to this prayer, and its own easy assurance of how soon God will heal the wounds He has made, as well as the impatience with which God receives it, oblige us to take the prayer in another sense than the hymn which has been derived from it.[1] It offers but one more symptom of the optimism of this light-hearted people, whom no discipline and no judgment can impress with the reality of their incurable decay. They said of themselves, *The bricks are fallen, let us build with stones*,[2] and now they say just as easily and airily of their God, *He hath torn* only *that He may heal:* we are fallen, but *He will raise us up again in a day or two.* At first it is still God who speaks.

I am going My way, I am returning to My own place,[3] *until they feel their guilt and seek My face. When trouble comes upon them, they will soon* enough *seek Me, saying:*[4]—

> *"Come and let us return to Jehovah:*
> *For He hath rent, that He may heal us,*
> *And hath wounded,*[5] *that He may bind us up.*
> *He will bring us to life in a couple of days;*
> *On the third day He will raise us up* again,
> *That we may live in His presence.*

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[1] Cheyne indeed (Introduction to Robertson Smith's *Prophets of Israel*) takes the prayer to be genuine, but an intrusion. His reasons do not persuade me. But at least it is clear that there is a want of connection between the prayer and what follows it, unless the prayer be understood in the sense explained above.

[2] Isaiah ix. 10.

[3] Cf. Isaiah xviii. 4.

[4] *Saying:* so the LXX. adds, and thereby connects chap. v. with chap. vi.

[5] Read יִגֹּף.

Let us know, let us follow up[1] *to know, Jehovah:*
As soon as we seek Him, we shall find Him.[2]
And He shall come to us like the winter-rain,
Like the spring-rain, pouring on the land!"

But how is this fair prayer received by God? With incredulity, with impatience. *What can I make of thee, Ephraim? what can I make of thee, Judah? since your love is like the morning cloud and like the dew so early gone.* Their shallow hearts need deepening. Have they not been deepened enough? *Wherefore I have hewn* them *by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth, and My judgment goeth forth like the lightning.*[3] *For leal love have I desired, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.*

That the discourse comes back to the ritual is very intelligible. For what could make repentance seem so easy as the belief that forgiveness can be won by simply offering sacrifices? Then the prophet leaps upon what each new year of that anarchy revealed afresh—the profound sinfulness of the people.

But they in human fashion[4] *have transgressed the covenant! There*—he will now point out the very spots—*have they betrayed*[5] *Me! Gilead is a city of evil-*

[1] Literally *hunt, pursue.* It is the same word as is used of the unfaithful Israel's pursuit of the Ba'alim, chap. ii. 9.

[2] So by a rearrangement of consonants (כשחרנו כן נמצאהו) and the help of the LXX. (*εὑρήσομεν αὐτόν*) Giesebrecht (*Beiträge*, p. 208) proposes to read the clause, which in the traditional text runs, *like the morn His going forth shall be certain.*

[3] Read מִשְׁפָּטִי כָאוֹר יֵצֵא.

[4] Or *like Adam,* or (Guthe) *like the heathen.*

[5] The verb means to prove false to any contract, but especially marriage.

doers: stamped with bloody footprints; assassins[1] *in troops; a gang of priests murder on the way to Shechem. Yea, crime*[2] *have they done. In the house of Israel I have seen horrors: there Ephraim hath played the harlot: Israel is defiled—Judah as well.*[3]

Truly the sinfulness of Israel is endless. Every effort to redeem them only discovers more of it. *When I would turn, when I would heal Israel, then the guilt of Ephraim displays itself and the evils of Samaria,* these namely: *that they work fraud, and the thief cometh in*—evidently a technical term for housebreaking[4]—while *abroad a crew* of highwaymen *foray. And they never think in their hearts that all their evil is recorded by Me. Now have their deeds encompassed them: they are constantly before Me.*

Evidently real repentance on the part of such a people is impossible. As Hosea said before, *Their deeds will not let them return.*[5]

4. Wickedness in High Places.

Hosea vii. 3-7.

There follows now a very difficult passage. The text is corrupt, and we have no means of determining what precise events are intended. The drift of meaning, however, is evident. The disorder and licentiousness of the people are favoured in high places; the throne itself is guilty.

[1] Read מחבי.

[2] In several passages of the Old Testament the word means unchastity.

[3] Here the LXX. close chap. vi., taking 11*b* along with chap. vii. Some think the whole of ver. 11 to be a Judæan gloss.

[4] Cf. Joel ii. 9, and the New Testament phrase *to come as a thief.*

[5] v. 4.

With their evil they make a king glad, and princes with their falsehoods: all of them are adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker, . . . [1]

On the day of our king—some coronation or king's birthday—*the princes were sick with fever from wine. He stretched forth his hand with loose fellows,*[2] presumably made them his associates. *Like an oven have they made* [3] *their hearts with their intriguing.* [4] *All night their anger sleepeth:* [5] *in the morning it blazes like a flame of fire. All of them glow like an oven, and devour their rulers: all their kings have fallen, without one of them calling on Me.*

An obscure passage upon obscure events; yet so lurid with the passion of that fevered people in the flagrant years 743—735 that we can make out the kind of crimes described. A king surrounded by loose and unscrupulous nobles: adultery, drunkenness, conspiracies, assassinations: every man striking for himself; none appealing to God.

From the court, then, downwards, by princes, priests and prophets, to the common fathers of Israel and their households, immorality prevails. There is

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[1] The text is unsound. Heb.: "like an oven kindled by the baker, the stirrer (stoker or kneader ?) resteth from kneading the dough until it be leavened." LXX.: *ὡς κλίβανος καιόμενος εἰς πέψιν κατακαύματος ἀπὸ τῆς φλογός ἀπὸ φυράσεως στέατος ἕως τοῦ ξυμωθῆναι αὐτό*—*i.e.* for יעבת they read אש לחבת. Oort emends Heb. to בוער הם אפהו, which gets rid of the difficulty of a feminine participle with תנור. Wellhausen omits whole clause as a gloss on ver. 6. But if there be a gloss it properly commences with ישבת.

[2] LXX. *μετατοιμῶν* ? ?

[3] LXX. *kindled*, בָּעֲרוּ. So Vollers, *Z.A.T.W.*, III. 250.

[4] Lit. *lurking.*

[5] Massoretic Text with different vowels reads *their baker.* LXX. *Εφραιμ* !

no redeeming feature, and no hope of better things. For repentance itself the capacity is gone.

In making so thorough an indictment of the moral condition of Israel, it would have been impossible for Hosea not to speak also of the political stupidity and restlessness which resulted from it. But he has largely reserved these for that part of his discourse which now follows, and which we will take in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

A PEOPLE IN DECAY: II. POLITICALLY

Hosea vii. 8—x.

MORAL decay means political decay. Sins like these are the gangrene of nations. It is part of Hosea's greatness to have traced this, a proof of that versatility which distinguishes him above other prophets. The most spiritual of them all, he is at the same time the most political. We owe him an analysis of repentance to which the New Testament has little to add;[1] but he has also left us a criticism of society and of politics in Israel, unrivalled except by Isaiah. We owe him an intellectual conception of God,[2] which for the first time in Israel exploded idolatry; yet he also is the first to define Israel's position in the politics of Western Asia. With the simple courage of conscience Amos had said to the people: You are bad, therefore you must perish. But Hosea's is the insight to follow the processes by which sin brings forth death—to trace, for instance, the effects of impurity upon a nation's powers of reproduction, as well as upon its intellectual vigour.

So intimate are these two faculties of Hosea, that in chapters devoted chiefly to the sins of Israel we have already seen him expose the political disasters that

[1] See below, Chap. XXII. [2] See Chap. XXI.

follow. But from the point we have now reached—chap. vii. 8—the proportion of his prophesying is reversed: he gives us less of the sin and more of the social decay and political folly of his age.

I. The Confusion of the Nation.

Hosea vii. 8—viii. 3.

Hosea begins by summing up the public aspect of Israel in two epigrams, short but of marvellous adequacy (vii. 8):—

Ephraim—among the nations he mixeth himself:
Ephraim has become a cake not turned.

It is a great crisis for any nation to pass from the seclusion of its youth and become a factor in the main history of the world. But for Israel the crisis was trebly great. Their difference from all other tribes about them had struck the Canaanites on their first entry to the land:[1] their own earliest writers had emphasised their seclusion as their strength;[2] and their first prophets consistently deprecated every overture made by them either to Egypt or to Assyria. We feel the force of the prophets' policy when we remember what happened to the Philistines. These were a people as strong and as distinctive as Israel, with whom at one time they disputed possession of the whole land. But their position as traders in the main line of traffic between Asia and Africa rendered the Philistines peculiarly open to foreign influence. They were now Egyptian vassals, now Assyrian victims; and after the invasion of Alexander the Great their cities became

[1] Numb. xxiii. 9*b*; Josh. ii. 8. [2] Deut. xxxiii. 27.

centres of Hellenism, while the Jews upon their secluded hills still stubbornly held unmixed their race and their religion. This contrast, so remarkably developed in later centuries, has justified the prophets of the eighth in their anxiety that Israel should not annul the advantages of her geographical seclusion by trade or treaties with the Gentiles. But it was easier for Judæa to take heed to the warning than for Ephraim. The latter lies as open and fertile as her sister-province is barren and aloof. She has many gates into the world, and they open upon many markets. Nobler opportunities there could not be for a nation in the maturity of its genius and loyal to its vocation :—

> *Rejoice, O Zebulun, in thine outgoings:*
> *They shall call the nations to the mountain;*
> *They shall suck of the abundance of the seas,*
> *And of the treasure that is stored in the sands.*[1]

But in the time of his outgoings Ephraim was not sure of himself nor true to his God, the one secret and strength of the national distinctiveness. So he met the world weak and unformed, and, instead of impressing it, was by it dissipated and confused. The tides of a lavish commerce scattered abroad the faculties of the people, and swept back upon their life alien fashions and tempers, to subdue which there was neither native strength nor definiteness of national purpose. All this is what Hosea means by the first of his epigrams: *Ephraim—among the nations he lets himself be poured out*, or *mixed up*. The form of the verb does not elsewhere occur; but it is reflexive, and the meaning of the root is certain. *Balal* is to *pour out*, or *mingle*, as

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 18, 19.

of oil in the sacrificial flour. Yet it is sometimes used of a mixing which is not sacred, but profane and hopeless. It is applied to the first great confusion of mankind, to which a popular etymology has traced the name Babel, as if for Balbel. Derivatives of the stem bear the additional ideas of staining and impurity. The alternative renderings which have been proposed, *lets himself be soaked* and *scatters himself* abroad like wheat among tares, are not so probable, yet hardly change the meaning.[1] Ephraim wastes and confuses himself among the Gentiles. The nation's character is so disguised that Hosea afterwards nicknames him Canaan ;[2] their religion so filled with foreign influences that he calls the people the harlot of the Ba'alim.

If the first of Hosea's epigrams satirises Israel's foreign relations, the second, with equal brevity and wit, hits off the temper and constitution of society at home. For the metaphor of which this epigram is composed Hosea has gone to the baker. Among all classes in the East, especially under conditions requiring haste, there is in demand a round flat scone, which is baked by being laid on hot stones or attached to the wall of a heated oven. The whole art of baking consists in turning the scone over at the proper moment. If this be mismanaged, it does not need a baker to tell us that one side may be burnt to a cinder,

[1] יִתְבֹּלָל from בלל. In Phœn. בלל seems to have been used as in Israel of the sacrificial mingling of oil and flour (cf. Robertson Smith, *Religion of Semites*, I. 203); in Arabic *ball* is to weaken a strong liquid with water, while *balbal* is to be confused, disordered. The Syriac *balal* is to mix. Some have taken Hosea's יתבלל as if from בליל (Isa. xxx. 24; Job vi. 5), usually understood as a mixed crop of wheat and inferior vegetables for fodder; but there is reason to believe בליל means rather fresh corn. The derivation from בלה, to grow old, does not seem probable. [2] xii. 8.

while the other remains raw. *Ephraim*, says Hosea, *is an unturned cake.*

By this he may mean one of several things, or all of them together, for they are infectious of each other. There was, for instance, the social condition of the people. What can better be described as an unturned scone than a community one half of whose number are too rich, and the other too poor? Or Hosea may refer to that unequal distribution of religion through life with which in other parts of his prophecy he reproaches Israel. They keep their religion, as Amos more fully tells us, for their temples, and neglect to carry its spirit into their daily business. Or he may refer to Israel's politics, which were equally in want of thoroughness. They rushed hotly at an enterprise, but having expended so much fire in the beginning of it, they let the end drop cold and dead. Or he may wish to satirise, like Amos, Israel's imperfect culture—the pretentious and overdone arts, stuck excrescence-wise upon the unrefined bulk of the nation, just as in many German principalities last century society took on a few French fashions in rough and exaggerated forms, while at heart still brutal and coarse. Hosea may mean any one of these things, for the figure suits all, and all spring from the same defect. Want of thoroughness and equable effort was Israel's besetting sin, and it told on all sides of his life. How better describe a half-fed people, a half-cultured society, a half-lived religion, a half-hearted policy, than by a half-baked scone?

We who are so proud of our political bakers, we who scorn the rapid revolutions of our neighbours and complacently dwell upon our equable ovens, those slow and cautious centuries of political development which

lie behind us—have we anything better than our neighbours, anything better than Israel, to show in our civilisation? Hosea's epigram fits us to the letter. After all those ages of baking, society is still with us *an unturned scone:* one end of the nation with the strength burnt out of it by too much enjoyment of life, the other with not enough of warmth to be quickened into anything like adequate vitality. No man can deny that this is so; we are able to live only by shutting our hearts to the fact. Or is religion equably distributed through the lives of the religious portion of our nation? Of late years religion has spread, and spread wonderfully, but of how many Christians is it still true that they are but half-baked—living a life one side of which is reeking with the smoke of sacrifice, while the other is never warmed by one religious thought. We may have too much religion if we confine it to one day or one department of life: our worship overdone, with the sap and the freshness burnt out of it, cindery, dusty, unattractive, fit only for crumbling; our conduct cold, damp and heavy, like dough the fire has never reached.

Upon the theme of these two epigrams the other verses of this chapter are variations. Has Ephraim mixed himself among the peoples? *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not,* senselessly congratulating himself upon the increase of his trade and wealth, while he does not feel that these have sucked from him all his distinctive virtue. *Yea, grey hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knoweth it not.* He makes his energy the measure of his life, as Isaiah also marked,[1] but sees not that it all means waste and

[1] ix. 9 f.

decay. *The pride of Israel testifieth to his face, yet*—even when the pride of the nation is touched to the quick by such humiliating overtures as they make to both Assyria and Egypt [1]—*they do not return to Jehovah their God, nor seek Him for all this.*

With virtue and single-hearted faith have disappeared intellect and the capacity for affairs. *Ephraim is become like a silly dove—a dove without heart,* to the Hebrews the organ of the wits of a man—*they cry to Egypt, they go off to Assyria.* Poor pigeon of a people, fluttering from one refuge to another! But *as they go I will throw over them My net, like a bird of the air I will bring them down. I will punish them as their congregation have heard*—this text as it stands [2] can only mean "in the manner I have publicly proclaimed in Israel." *Woe to them that they have strayed from Me! Damnation to them that they have rebelled against Me! While I would have redeemed them, they spoke lies about Me. And they have never cried unto Me with their heart, but they keep howling on their beds for corn and new wine.* No real repentance theirs, but some fear of drought and miscarriage of the harvests, a sensual and servile sorrow in which they wallow. They seek God with no heart, no true appreciation of what He is, but use the senseless means by which the heathen invoke their gods: *they cut themselves,*[3] *and* so *apostatise from Me! And yet it was I who disciplined them, I strengthened their arm, but with regard to Me they kept thinking* only *evil!* So fickle and sensitive to fear, *they turn* indeed, *but not upwards*; no Godward conversion theirs. In their repentance *they are like a bow which swerves*—off upon

[1] See above, p. 261, and below, p. 337.

[2] But the reading is very doubtful.

[3] For יתגררו read יתגדדו.

some impulse of their ill-balanced natures. *Their princes must fall by the sword because of the bitterness*—we should have expected "falseness"—*of their tongue: this is their scorn in the land of Egypt!* To the allusion we have no key.

With so false a people nothing can be done. Their doom is inevitable. So

"Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war."

To thy mouth with the trumpet! The Eagle is down upon the house of Jehovah![1] Where the carcase is, there are the eagles gathered together. *For*—to sum up the whole crisis—*they have transgressed My covenant, and against My law have they rebelled. To Me they cry, My God, we know Thee, we Israel!* What does it matter? *Israel hath spurned the good:*[2] *the Foe must pursue him.*

It is the same climax of inevitable war to which Amos led up his periods; and a new subject is now introduced.

2. Artificial Kings and Artificial Gods.

Hosea viii. 4-13.

The curse of such a state of dissipation as that to which Israel had fallen is that it produces no men. Had the people had in them "the root of the matter,"

[1] Wellhausen's objection to the first clause, that one does not set a trumpet to one's *gums*, which חֵךְ literally means, is beside the mark. חֵךְ is more than once used of the mouth as a whole (Job viii. 7; Prov. v. 3). The second clause gives the reason of the trumpet, the alarum trumpet, in the first. Read כִּי נִשַּׂר (so also Wellhausen).

[2] Cf. Amos: *Seek Me = Seek the good;* and Jesus: *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord; but he that doeth the will of My Father in heaven.*

had there been the stalk and the fibre of a national consciousness and purpose, it would have blossomed to a man. In the similar time of her outgoings upon the world Prussia had her Frederick the Great, and Israel, too, would have produced a leader, a heaven-sent king, if the national spirit had not been squandered on foreign trade and fashions. But after the death of Jeroboam every man who rose to eminence in Israel, rose, not on the nation, but only on the fevered and transient impulse of some faction; and through the broken years one party monarch was lifted after another to the brief tenancy of a blood-stained throne. They were not from God, these monarchs; but man-made, and sooner or later man-murdered. With his sharp insight Hosea likens these artificial kings to the artificial gods, also the work of men's hands; and till near the close of his book the idols of the sanctuary and the puppets of the throne form the twin targets of his scorn.

They have made kings, but not from Me; they have made princes, but I knew not. With their silver and their gold they have manufactured themselves idols, only that they[1] *may be cut off*—king after king, idol upon idol. *He loathes thy Calf, O Samaria,* the thing of wood and gold which thou callest Jehovah. And God confirms this. *Kindled is Mine anger against them! How long will they be incapable of innocence?*—unable to clear themselves of guilt! The idol is still in his mind. *For from Israel is it also*—as much as the puppet-kings; *a workman made it, and no god is it. Yea, splinters shall the Calf of Samaria become.*[2] Splinters

[1] So LXX., but Hebrew *it.*

[2] Davidson's *Syntax*, § 136, Rem. 1, and § 71, Rom. 4.

shall everything in Israel become. *For they sow the wind, and the whirlwind shall they reap.* Indeed like a storm Hosea's own language now sweeps along; and his metaphors are torn into shreds upon it. *Stalk it hath none: the sprout brings forth no grain: if it were to bring forth, strangers would swallow it.*[1] Nay, *Israel hath let herself be swallowed up! Already are they become among the nations like a vessel there is no more use for.* Heathen empires have sucked them dry. *They have gone up to Assyria like a runaway wild-ass. Ephraim hath hired lovers.*[2] It is again the note of their mad dissipation among the foreigners. *But if they* thus *give themselves away among the nations, I must gather them in, and* then *shall they have to cease a little from the anointing of a king and princes.*[3] This wilful roaming of theirs among the foreigners shall be followed by compulsory exile, and all their unholy artificial politics shall cease. The discourse turns to the other target. *For Ephraim hath multiplied altars—to sin; altars are his own—to sin. Were I to write for him by myriads My laws,*[4] *as those of a stranger would they be accounted. They slay burnt-offerings for Me and eat flesh.*[5] *Jehovah hath no delight in them. Now must He remember their*

[1] So by the accents runs the verse, but, as Wellhausen has pointed out, both its sense and its assonance are better expressed by another arrangement: *Hath it grown up?* then *it hath no shoot, nor bringeth forth fruit.*

ên lo ṣemach,
b'li ya'aseh qemach.

Yet to this there is a grammatical obstacle.

[2] Wellhausen's reading *to Egypt with love gifts* scarcely suits the verb *go up.* Notice the play upon P(h)ere', *wild-ass* and Ephra'[im].

[3] So LXX. reads. Heb.: *they shall involve themselves with tribute to the king of princes,* presumably the Assyrian monarch.

[4] So LXX. [5] Text obscure.

guilt and make visitation upon their sin. They—to Egypt —shall return. . . .[1] Back to their ancient servitude must they go, as formerly He said He would withdraw them to the wilderness.[2]

3. The Effects of Exile.

Hosea ix. 1-9.

Hosea now turns to describe the effects of exile upon the social and religious habits of the people. It must break up at once the joy and the sacredness of their lives. Every pleasure will be removed, every taste offended. Indeed, even now, with their conscience of having deserted Jehovah, they cannot pretend to enjoy the feasts of the Ba'alim in the same hearty way as the heathen with whom they mix. But, whether or no, the time is near when nature-feasts and all other religious ceremonies—all that makes life glad and regular and solemn—shall be impossible.

Rejoice not, O Israel, to the pitch of *rapture like the heathen, for thou hast played the harlot from thy God; a harlot's hire hast thou loved on all threshing-floors.*[3] *Threshing-floor and wine-vat shall ignore*[4] *them, and the new wine shall play them false. They shall not abide in the land of Jehovah, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and in Assyria they shall eat what is unclean. They shall not pour libations to Jehovah, nor prepare*[5] *for Him their sacrifices. Like the bread of sorrows shall their*

[1] LXX. addition here is plainly borrowed from ix. 3. For the reasons for omitting ver. 14 see above, p. 223.

[2] ii. 16.

[3] On this verse see more particularly below, pp. 340 ff.

[4] So LXX.

[5] Read יערכו. Cf. with the whole passage iii. 4 f.

bread[1] *be; all that eat of it shall be defiled:* yea, *their bread shall be* only *for their appetite; they shall not bring* it[2] *to the temple of Jehovah.* He cannot be worshipped off His own land. They will have to live like animals, divorced from religion, unable to hold communion with their God. *What shall ye do for days*[3] *of festival, or for a day of pilgrimage to Jehovah? For lo,* they *shall be gone forth from destruction,*[4] the shock and invasion of their land, only *that Egypt may gather them in, Memphis give them sepulture, nettles inherit their jewels of silver, thorns* come up *in their tents.* The threat of exile still wavers between Assyria and Egypt. And in Egypt Memphis is chosen as the destined grave of Israel; for even then her Pyramids and mausoleums were ancient and renowned, her vaults and sepulchres were countless and spacious.

But what need is there to seek the future for Israel's doom, when already this is being fulfilled by the corruption of her spiritual leaders?

The days of visitation have come, have come the days of requital. Israel already *experiences*[5] *them! A fool is the prophet, raving mad the man of the spirit.* The old ecstasy of Saul's day has become delirium and fanaticism.[6] Why? *For the mass of thy guilt and the multiplied treachery! Ephraim acts the spy with my God.* There is probably a play on the name, for with the meaning a *watchman* for God it is elsewhere used as an honourable title of the prophets. *The prophet is a fowler's snare upon all his ways. Treachery—they have*

[1] לחמם for לחם.
[2] יְבִיאוּ.
[3] Plural: so LXX.
[4] Others read *they are gone to Assyria.*
[5] Literally *knows.* See below, p. 321, *n.* 9.
[6] See above, p. 28.

made it profound in the very *house of their God.*[1] *They have done corruptly, as in the days of Gibeah. Their iniquity is remembered; visitation is made on their sin.*

These then were the symptoms of the profound political decay which followed on Israel's immorality. The national spirit and unity of the people had disappeared. Society—half of it was raw, half of it was baked to a cinder. The nation, broken into factions, produced no man to lead, no king with the stamp of God upon him. Anarchy prevailed; monarchs were made and murdered. There was no prestige abroad, nothing but contempt among the Gentiles for a people whom they had exhausted. Judgment was inevitable by exile—nay, it had come already in the corruption of the spiritual leaders of the nation.

Hosea now turns to probe a deeper corruption still.

4. "The Corruption that is through Lust."

Hosea ix. 10-17 : cf. iv. 11-14.

Those who at the present time are enforcing among us the revival of a Paganism—without the Pagan conscience—and exalting licentiousness to the level of an art, forget how frequently the human race has attempted their experiment, with far more sincerity than they themselves can put into it, and how invariably the result has been recorded by history to be weariness, decay and death. On this occasion we have the story told to us by one who to the experience of the statesman adds the vision of the poet.

[1] So, after the LXX., by taking העמיקו with this verse, 8, instead of with ver. 9.

The generation to which Hosea belonged practised a periodical unchastity under the alleged sanctions of nature and religion. And, although their prophet told them that—like our own apostates from Christianity—they could never do so with the abandon of the Pagans, for they carried within them the conscience and the memory of a higher faith, it appears that even the fathers of Israel resorted openly and without shame to the licentious rites of the sanctuaries. In an earlier passage of his book Hosea insists that all this must impair the people's intellect. *Harlotry takes away the brains.*[1] He has shown also how it confuses the family, and has exposed the old delusion that men may be impure and keep their womankind chaste.[2] But now he diagnoses another of the inevitable results of this sin. After tracing the sin, and the theory of life which permitted it, to their historical beginnings at the entry of the people into Canaan, he describes how the long practice of it, no matter how pretentious its sanctions, inevitably leads not only to exterminating strifes, but to the decay of the vigour of the nation, to barrenness and a diminishing population.

Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, like the first fruit on a fig-tree in her first season I saw your fathers. So had the lusty nation appeared to God in its youth; in that dry wilderness all the sap and promise of spring were in its eyes, because it was still pure. But *they—they came to Ba'al-Peor*—the first of the shrines of Canaan which they touched—*and dedicated themselves to the Shame, and became as abominable as the object of their love. Ephraim*—the *Fruitful* name is emphasised—*their glory is flown away like a bird. No*

[1] iv. 12. [2] iv. 13, 14.

more birth, no more motherhood, no more conception![1] *Blasted is Ephraim, withered the root of them, fruit they produce not: yea, even when they beget children I slay the darlings of their womb. Yea, though they bring up their sons I bereave them,* till they are *poor in men. Yea, woe upon themselves also, when I look away from them! Ephraim*—again the *Fruitful* name is dragged to the front—*for prey, as I have seen, are his sons destined.*[2] *Ephraim*—he *must lead his sons to the slaughter.*

And the prophet interrupts with his chorus: *Give them, O LORD—what wilt Thou give them? Give them a miscarrying womb and breasts that are dry!*

All their mischief is in Gilgal—again the Divine voice strikes the connection between the national worship and the national sin—*yea, there do I hate them: for the evil of their doings from My house I will drive them. I will love them no more: all their nobles are rebels.*[3]

And again the prophet responds: *My God will cast them away, for they have not hearkened to Him, and they shall be vagabonds among the nations.*

Some of the warnings which Hosea enforces with regard to this sin have been instinctively felt by mankind since the beginnings of civilisation, and are found expressed among the proverbs of nearly all the languages.[4] But I am unaware of any earlier moralist

[1] Here, between vv. 11 and 12, Wellhausen with justice proposes to insert ver. 16.

[2] So Wellhausen, after LXX.; probably correct.

[3] So we may attempt to echo the play on the words.

[4] Cf., *e.g.*, the *Proverbs of Ptah-Hotep* the Egyptian, *circa* 2500 B.C. "There is no prudence in taking part in it, and thousands of men destroy themselves in order to enjoy a moment, brief as a dream, while they gain death so as to know it. It is a villainous . . . that

in any literature who traced the effects of national licentiousness in a diminishing population, or who exposed the persistent delusion of libertine men that they themselves may resort to vice, yet keep their womankind chaste. Hosea, so far as we know, was the first to do this. History in many periods has confirmed the justice of his observations, and by one strong voice after another enforced his terrible warnings. The experience of ancient Persia and Egypt; the languor of the Greek cities; the "deep weariness and sated lust" which in Imperial Rome "made human life a hell"; the decay which overtook Italy after the renascence of Paganism without the Pagan virtues; the strife and anarchy that have rent every court where, as in the case of Henri Quatre, the king set the example of libertinage; the incompetence, the poltroonery, the treachery, that have corrupted every camp where, as in French Metz in 1870, soldiers and officers gave way so openly to vice; the checks suffered by modern civilisation in face of barbarism because its pioneers mingled in vice with the savage races they were subduing; the number of great statesmen falling by their passion, and in their fall frustrating the hopes of nations; the great families worn out by indulgence; the homes broken up by infidelities; the tainting of the blood of a new generation by the poisonous practices of the old,—have not all these things been in every age, and do they not still happen near enough to ourselves to give us a great fear of the sin which causes them all? Alas! how slow men are to listen

of a man who excites himself (?); if he goes on to carry it out, his mind abandons him. For as for him who is without repugnance for such an [act], there is no good sense at all in him."—From the translation in *Records of the Past*, Second Series, Vol. III., p. 24.

and to lay to heart! Is it possible that we can gild by the names of frivolity and piquancy habits the wages of which are death? Is it possible that we can enjoy comedies which make such things their jest? We have among us many who find their business in the theatre, or in some of the periodical literature of our time, in writing and speaking and exhibiting as closely as they dare to limits of public decency. When will they learn that it is not upon the easy edge of mere conventions that they are capering, but upon the brink of those eternal laws whose further side is death and hell—that it is not the tolerance of their fellow-men they are testing, but the patience of God Himself? As for those loud few who claim licence in the name of art and literature, let us not shrink from them as if they were strong or their high words true. They are not strong, they are only reckless; their claims are lies. All history, the poets and the prophets, whether Christian or Pagan, are against them. They are traitors alike to art, to love, and to every other high interest of mankind.

It may be said that a large part of the art of the day, which takes great licence in dealing with these subjects, is exercised only by the ambition to expose that ruin and decay which Hosea himself affirms. This is true. Some of the ablest and most popular writers of our time have pictured the facts, which Hosea describes, with so vivid a realism that we cannot but judge them to be inspired to confirm his ancient warnings, and to excite a disgust of vice in a generation which otherwise treats vice so lightly. But if so, their ministry is exceeding narrow, and it is by their side that we best estimate the greatness of the ancient prophet. Their transcript of human life may be true to

the facts it selects, but we find in it no trace of facts which are greater and more essential to humanity. They have nothing to tell us of forgiveness and repentance, and yet these are as real as the things they describe. Their pessimism is unrelieved. They see the *corruption that is in the world through lust;* they forget that there is an *escape* from it.[1] It is Hosea's greatness that, while he felt the vices of his day with all needed thoroughness and realism, he yet never allowed them to be inevitable or ultimate, but preached repentance and pardon, with the possibility of holiness even for his depraved generation. It is the littleness of the Art of our day that these great facts are forgotten by her, though once she was their interpreter to men. When she remembers them the greatness of her past will return.

5. Once More: Puppet-Kings and Puppet-Gods.

Hosea x.

For another section, the tenth chapter, the prophet returns to the twin targets of his scorn: the idols and the puppet-kings. But few notes are needed. Observe the reiterated connection between the fertility of the land and the idolatry of the people.

A wanton vine is Israel; he lavishes his fruit:[2] *the more his fruit, the more he made his altars; the goodlier*

[1] 2 Peter i.

[2] Doubtful. The Heb. text gives an inappropriate if not impossible clause, even if יֵשׁוּה be taken from a root שׁוּה, to *set* or *produce* (Barth, *Etym. Stud.*, 66). LXX.: ὁ καρπὸς εὐθηνῶν αὐτῆς (A.Q. αὐτῆς εὐθηνῶν), "her [the vine's] fruit flourishing." Some parallel is required to בקק of the first clause; and it is possible that it may have been from a root שׁוּחַ or שִׁיחַ, corresponding to Arabic sâḥ, "to wander" in the sense of scattering or being scattered.

his land, the more goodly he made his maççeboth, or *sacred pillars. False is the heart of them: now must they atone for it. He shall break the neck of their altars; He shall ruin their pillars. For already they are saying, No king have we, for we have not feared Jehovah, and the king—what could he do for us? Speaking*[1] *of words, swearing of false oaths, making of bargains—till law*[2] *breaks out like weeds in the furrows of the field.*

For the Calf of Beth-Aven the inhabitants[3] *of Samaria shall be anxious: yea, mourn for him shall his people, and his priestlings shall writhe for him—for his glory that it is banished from him.* In these days of heavy tribute shall the gold of the golden calf be safe? *Yea, himself shall they pack*[4] *to Assyria; he shall be offered as tribute to King Pick-Quarrel.*[5] *Ephraim shall take disgrace, and Israel be ashamed because of his counsel.*[6] *Undone Samaria! Her king like a chip*[7] *on the face of the waters!* This may refer to one of the revolutions in which the king was murdered. But it seems more appropriate to the final catastrophe of 724-1: the fall of the kingdom, and the king's banishment to Assyria. If the latter, the verse has been inserted; but the following verse would lead us to take these disasters as still future. *And the high places of idolatry shall be destroyed, the sin of Israel; thorn and thistle shall come up on their altars. And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us.* It

[1] After LXX.
[2] Doubtful. Lawsuits?
[3] "Calf," "inhabitants"—so LXX.
[4] LXX. supplies.
[5] See above, p. 263.
[6] Very uncertain. Wellhausen reads *from his idol*, מעצבו.
[7] קצף: compare Arabic qṣf, "to break"; but there is also the assonant Arabic qṣb, "reed." The Rabbis translate *foam:* cf. the other meaning of קצף = outbreak of anger, which suggests *bubble.*

cannot be too often repeated: these handmade gods, these chips of kings, shall be swept away together.

Once more the prophet returns to the ancient origins of Israel's present sins, and once more to their shirking of the discipline necessary for spiritual results, but only that he may lead up as before to the inevitable doom. *From*[1] *the days of Gibeah thou hast sinned, O Israel. There have they remained*—never progressed beyond their position there—*and this without war overtaking them in Gibeah against the dastards.*[2] *As soon as I please, I can chastise them, and peoples shall be gathered against them in chastisement for their double sin.* This can scarcely be, as some suggest, the two calves at Bethel and Dan. More probably it is still the idols and the man-made kings. Now he returns to the ambition of the people for spiritual results without a spiritual discipline.

And Ephraim is a broken-in heifer, that loveth to thresh.[3] *But I have come on her fair neck. I will yoke Ephraim; Judah must plough; Jacob must harrow for himself.* It is all very well for the unmuzzled beast[4] to love the threshing, but harder and unrewarded labours of ploughing and harrowing have to come before the floor be heaped with sheaves. Israel must not expect religious festival without religious discipline. *Sow for yourselves righteousness; then shall ye reap the*

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[1] Rosenmüller: *more than in.* These days are evidently not the beginning of the kingship under Saul (so Wellhausen), for with that Hosea has no quarrel, but either the idolatry of Micah (Judg. xvii. 3 ff.), or more probably the crime of Benjamin (Judg. xix. 22).

[2] Obscure; text corrupt, and in next verse uncertain.

[3] For the sense of the verse both participles are surely needed. Wellhausen thinks two redundant.

[4] Deut. xxv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18.

fruit of God's leal love.[1] *Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek Jehovah, till He come and shower salvation*[2] *upon you.*[3] *Ye have ploughed wickedness; disaster have ye reaped: ye have eaten the fruit of falsehood; for thou didst trust in thy chariots,*[4] *in the multitude of thy warriors. For the tumult* of war *shall arise among thy tribes,*[5] *and all thy fenced cities shall be ruined, as Salman beat to ruin Beth-Arbel*[6] *in the day of war: the mother shall be broken on the children*—presumably the land shall fall with the falling of her cities. *Thus shall I do to you, O house of Israel,*[7] *because of the evil of your evil: soon shall the king of Israel be undone—undone.*

The political decay of Israel, then, so deeply figured in all these chapters, must end in utter collapse. Let us sum up the gradual features of this decay: the substance of the people scattered abroad; the national spirit dissipated; the national prestige humbled; the kings mere puppets; the prophets corrupted; the national vigour sapped by impurity; the idolatry conscious of its impotence.

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[1] LXX.: *fruit of life.*

[2] צדק surely in the sense in which we find it in Isa. xl. ff. LXX.: *the fruits of righteousness shall be yours.*

[3] We shall return to this passage in dealing with Repentance; see p. 345.

[4] So LXX. Wellhausen suspects authenticity of the whole clause.

[5] Wellhausen proposes to read בעריך for בעמיך, but there is no need.

[6] See above, p. 216, *n.* 5.

[7] So LXX.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FATHERHOOD AND HUMANITY OF GOD

HOSEA xi.

FROM the thick jungle of Hosea's travail, the eleventh chapter breaks like a high and open mound. The prophet enjoys the first of his two clear visions—that of the Past.[1] Judgment continues to descend. Israel's Sun is near his setting, but before he sinks—

> "A lingering light he fondly throws
> On the dear hills, whence first he rose."

Across these confused and vicious years, through which he has painfully made his way, Hosea sees the tenderness and the romance of the early history of his people. And although he must strike the old despairing note—that, by the insincerity of the present generation, all the ancient guidance of their God must end in this! —yet for some moments the blessed memory shines by itself, and God's mercy appears to triumph over Israel's ingratitude. Surely their sun will not set; Love must prevail. To which assurance a later voice from the Exile has added, in verses 10 and 11, a confirmation suitable to its own circumstances.

> *When Israel was a child, then I loved him,*
> *And from Egypt I called* him *to be My son.*

[1] See above, p. 253.

The early history of Israel was a romance. Think of it historically. Before the Most High there spread an array of kingdoms and peoples. At their head were three strong princes—sons indeed of God, if all the heritage of the past, the power of the present and the promise of the future be tokens. Egypt, wrapt in the rich and jewelled web of centuries, basked by Nile and Pyramid, all the wonder of the world's art in his dreamy eyes. Opposite him Assyria, with barer but more massive limbs, stood erect upon his highlands, grasping in his sword the promise of the world's power. Between the two, and using both of them, yet with his eyes westward on an empire of which neither dreamed, the Phœnician on his sea-coast built his storehouses and sped his navies, the promise of the world's wealth. It must ever remain the supreme romance of history, that the true son of God, bearer of His love and righteousness to all mankind, should be found, not only outside this powerful trinity, but in the puny and despised captive of one of them—in a people that was not a state, that had not a country, that was without a history, and, if appearances be true, was as yet devoid of even the rudiments of civilisation—a child people and a slave.

That was the Romance, and Hosea gives us the Grace which made it. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him.* The verb is a distinct impulse: *I began, I learned, to love him.* God's eyes, that passed unheeding the adult princes of the world, fell upon this little slave boy, and He loved him and gave him a career: *from Egypt I called* him *to be My son.*

Now, historically, it was the persuasion of this which made Israel. All their distinctiveness and character, their progress from a level with other nomadic tribes

to the rank of the greatest religious teachers of humanity, started from the memory of these two facts—that God loved them, and that God called them. This was an unfailing conscience—the obligation that they were not their own, the irresistible motive to repentance even in their utmost backsliding, the unquenchable hope of a destiny in their direst days of defeat and scattering.

Some, of course, may cavil at the narrow, national scale on which such a belief was held, but let them remember that it was held in trust for all mankind. To snarl that Israel felt this sonship to God only for themselves, is to forget that it is they who have persuaded humanity that this is the only kind of sonship worth claiming. Almost every other nation of antiquity imagined a filial relation to the deity, but it was either through some fabulous physical descent, and then often confined only to kings and heroes, or by some mystical mingling of the Divine with the human, which was just as gross and sensuous. Israel alone defined the connection as a historical and a moral one. *The sons of God are begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*[1] Sonship to God is something not physical, but moral and historical, into which men are carried by a supreme awakening to the Divine love and authority. Israel, it is true, felt this only in a general way for the nation as a whole;[2] but their conception of it embraced just those moral contents which form the glory of Christ's doctrine of the Divine sonship of the individual. The belief that God is our Father does not come to us with our carnal birth—except in possibility: the persuasion of it is not

[1] St. John's Gospel, i. 12, 13.

[2] Or occasionally for the king as the nation's representative.

conferred by our baptism except in so far as that is Christ's own seal to the fact that God Almighty loves us and has marked us for His own. To us sonship is a becoming, not a being—the awakening of our adult minds into the surprise of a Father's undeserved mercy, into the constraint of His authority and the assurance of the destiny He has laid up for us. It is conferred by love, and confirmed by duty. Neither has power brought it, nor wisdom, nor wealth, but it has come solely with the wonder of the knowledge that God loves us, and has always loved us, as well as in the sense, immediately following, of a true vocation to serve Him. Sonship which is less than this is no sonship at all. But so much as this is possible to every man through Jesus Christ. His constant message is that the Father loves every one of us, and that if we *know*[1] that love, we are God's sons indeed. To them who feel it, adoption into the number and privileges of the sons of God comes with the amazement and the romance which glorified God's choice of the child-slave Israel. *Behold*, they cry, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*[2]

But we cannot be loved by God and left where we are. Beyond the grace there lies the long discipline and destiny. We are called from servitude to freedom, from the world to God—each of us to run a course, and do a work, which can be done by no one else. That Israel did not perceive this was God's sore sorrow with them.

The more I[3] *called to them, the farther they went from Me.*[4] *They to the Ba'alim kept sacrificing, and to images*

[1] See below, pp. 321-3. [2] 1 John iii. [3] So rightly the LXX.

[4] LXX., rightly separating מִפְּנֵיהֶם into מִפָּנַי and הֵם, which latter is the nominative to the next clause.

offering incense. But God persevered with grace, and the story is at first continued in the figure of Fatherhood with which it commenced ; then it changes to the metaphor of a humane man's goodness to his beasts. *Yet I taught Ephraim to walk, holding them on Mine arms,*[1] *but they knew not that I healed them*—presumably when they fell and hurt themselves. *With the cords of a man I would draw them, with bands of love; and I was to them as those who lift up the yoke on their jaws, and gently would I give them to eat.*[2] It is the picture of a team of bullocks, in charge of a kind driver. Israel are no longer the wanton young cattle of the previous chapter, which need the yoke firmly fastened on their neck,[3] but a team of toiling oxen mounting some steep road. There is no use now for the rough ropes, by which frisky animals are kept to their work ; but the driver, coming to his beasts' heads, by the gentle touch of his hand at their mouths and by words of sympathy *draws* them after him. *I drew them with cords of a man, and with bands of love.* Yet there is the yoke, and it would seem that certain forms of this, when beasts were working upwards, as we should say *against the collar*, pressed and rubbed upon them, so that the humane driver, when he came to their heads, eased the yoke with his hands. *I was as they that take the yoke off their jaws;*[4] and then, when they got to the top of the hill, he would rest and feed them. That is the picture, and however uncertain we may feel as to some of its details, it is obviously a passage

[1] So again rightly the LXX.

[2] The reading is uncertain. The לֹא of the following verse (6) must be read as the Greek reads it, as לוֹ, and taken with ver. 5.

[3] x. 11.

[4] Or lifted forward from the neck to the jaws.

—Ewald says "the earliest of all passages"—in which "human means precisely the same as love." It ought to be taken along with that other passage in the great Prophecy of the Exile, where God is described as He that led them through *the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble: as a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave him rest.*[1]

Thus then the figure of the fatherliness of God changes into that of His gentleness or humanity. Do not let us think that there is here either any descent of the poetry or want of connection between the two figures. The change is true, not only to Israel's, but to our own experience. Men are all either the eager children of happy, irresponsible days, or the bounden, plodding draught-cattle of life's serious burdens and charges. Hosea's double figure reflects human life in its whole range. Which of us has not known this fatherliness of the Most High, exercised upon us, as upon Israel, throughout our years of carelessness and disregard? It was God Himself who taught and trained us then;—

> "When through the slippery paths of youth
> With heedless steps I ran,
> Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,
> And led me up to man.'

Those speedy recoveries from the blunders of early wilfulness, those redemptions from the sins of youth—happy were we if we knew that it was *He who healed us.* But there comes a time when men pass from leading-strings to harness—when we feel faith less and duty more—when our work touches us more closely than our God. Death must be a strange transformer of the

[1] Isa. lxiii. 13, 14.

spirit, yet surely not more strange than life, which out of the eager buoyant child makes in time the slow automaton of duty. It is such a stage which the fourth of these verses suits, when we look up, not so much for the fatherliness as for the gentleness and humanity of our God. A man has a mystic power of a very wonderful kind upon the animals over whom he is placed. On any of these wintry roads of ours we may see it, when a kind carter gets down at a hill, and, throwing the reins on his beast's back, will come to its head and touch it with his bare hands, and speak to it as if it were his fellow; till the deep eyes fill with light, and out of these things, so much weaker than itself, a touch, a glance, a word, there will come to it new strength to pull the stranded waggon onward. The man is as a god to the beast, coming down to help it, and it almost makes the beast human that he does so. Not otherwise does Hosea feel the help which God gives His own on the weary hills of life. We need not discipline, for our work is discipline enough, and the cares we carry of themselves keep us straight and steady. But we need sympathy and gentleness—this very humanity which the prophet attributes to our God. God comes and takes us by the head; through the mystic power which is above us, but which makes us like itself, we are lifted to our task. Let no one judge this incredible. The incredible would be that our God should prove any less to us than the merciful man is to his beast. But we are saved from argument by experience. When we remember how, as life has become steep and our strength exhausted, there has visited us a thought which has sharpened to a word, a word which has warmed to a touch, and we have drawn ourselves together and leapt up new men, can we feel

that God was any less in these things, than in the voice of conscience or the message of forgiveness, or the restraints of His discipline? Nay, though the reins be no longer felt, God is at our head, that we should not stumble nor stand still.

Upon this gracious passage there follows one of those swift revulsions of feeling, which we have learned almost to expect in Hosea. His insight again overtakes his love. The people will not respond to the goodness of their God; it is impossible to work upon minds so fickle and insincere. Discipline is what they need. *He shall return to the land of Egypt, or Asshur shall be his king* (it is still an alternative), *for they have refused to return* to Me. . . .[1] 'Tis but one more instance of the age-long apostasy of the people. *My people have a bias*[2] *to turn from Me; and though they* (the prophets) *call them upwards, none of them can lift them.*[3]

Yet God is God, and though prophecy fail He will attempt His Love once more. There follows the greatest passage in Hosea—deepest if not highest of his book—the breaking forth of that exhaustless mercy of the Most High which no sin of man can bar back nor wear out.

How am I to give thee up, O Ephraim?
How *am I to let thee go, O Israel?*
How am I to give thee up?
Am I to make an Admah of thee—a Ṣeboim?
My heart is turned upon Me,

[1] Ver. 6 has an obviously corrupt text, and, weakening as it does the climax of ver. 5, may be an insertion.

[2] *Are hung* or *swung towards turning away from Me.*

[3] This verse is also uncertain.

My compassions begin to boil:
I will not perform the fierceness of Mine anger,
I will not turn to destroy Ephraim;
For God am I and not man,
The Holy One in the midst of thee, yet I come not to consume![1]

Such a love has been the secret of Hosea's persistence through so many years with so faithless a people, and now, when he has failed, it takes voice to itself and in its irresistible fulness makes this last appeal. Once more before the end let Israel hear God in the utterness of His Love!

The verses are a climax, and obviously to be succeeded by a pause. On the brink of his doom, will Israel turn to such a God, at such a call? The next verse, though dependent for its promise on this same exhaustless Love, is from an entirely different circumstance, and cannot have been put by Hosea here.[2]

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[1] For בעיר, which makes nonsense, read לבעור, *to consume*, or with Wellhausen amend further לא אובה לבער, *I am not willing to consume.*

[2] *They will follow Jehovah; like a lion He will roar, and they shall hurry trembling from the west. Like birds shall they hurry trembling from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will bring them to their homes—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* Not only does this verse contain expressions which are unusual to Hosea, and a very strange metaphor, but it is not connected either historically or logically with the previous verse. The latter deals with the people before God has scattered them—offers them one more chance before exile comes on them. But in this verse they are already scattered, and just about to be brought back. It is such a promise as both in language and metaphor was common among the prophets of the Exile. In the LXX. the verse is taken from chap. xi. and put with chap. xii.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FINAL ARGUMENT

HOSEA xii.—xiv. 1.

THE impassioned call with which last chapter closed was by no means an assurance of salvation: *How am I to give thee up, Ephraim? how am I to let thee go, Israel?* On the contrary, it was the anguish of Love, when it hovers over its own on the brink of the destruction to which their wilfulness has led them, and before relinquishing them would seek, if possible, some last way to redeem. Surely that fatal morrow and the people's mad leap into it are not inevitable! At least, before they take the leap, let the prophet go back once more upon the moral situation of to-day, go back once more upon the past of the people, and see if he can find anything else to explain that bias to apostasy[1] which has brought them to this fatal brink—anything else which may move them to repentance even there. So in chaps. xii. and xiii. Hosea turns upon the now familiar trail of his argument, full of the Divine jealousy, determined to give the people one other chance to turn; but if they will not, he at least will justify God's relinquishment of them. The chapters throw even a brighter light upon the temper and habits of that

[1] xi. 7

generation. They again explore Israel's ancient history for causes of the present decline; and, in especial, they cite the spiritual experience of the Father of the nation, as if to show that what of repentance was possible for him is possible for his posterity also. But once more all hope is seen to be vain; and Hosea's last travail with his obstinate people closes in a doom even more awful than its predecessors.

The division into chapters is probably correct; but while chap. xiii. is well-ordered and clear, the arrangement, and in parts the meaning, of chap. xii. are very obscure.

I. The People and Their Father Jacob.

Hosea xii.

In no part even of the difficult Book of Hosea does the sacred text bristle with more problems. It may well be doubted whether the verses lie in their proper order, or, if they do, whether we have them entire as they came from the prophet, for the connection is not always perceptible.[1] We cannot believe, however, that the chapter is a bundle of isolated oracles, for the analogy between Jacob and his living posterity runs through the whole of it,[2] and the refrain that God must requite upon the nation their deeds is found both near the beginning and at the end of the chapter.[3] One is tempted to take the two fragments about the Patriarch (vv. 4, 5, and 13 f.) by themselves, and the more so that ver. 8 would follow so suitably on either ver. 2 or

[1] This is especially true of vv. 11 and 12.

[2] Even in the most detachable portion, vv. 8-10, where the אוֹן of ver. 9 seems to refer to the בְּאוֹנוֹ of ver. 4.

[3] Viz. in vv. 3 and 15.

ver. 3. But this clue is not sufficient; and till one more evident is discovered, it is perhaps best to keep to the extant arrangement.[1]

As before, the argument starts from the falseness of Israel, which is illustrated in the faithlessness of their foreign relations. *Ephraim hath compassed Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, and Judah . . .*[2] *Ephraim herds the wind,*[3] *and hunts the sirocco. All day long they heap up falsehood and fraud:*[4] *they strike a bargain with Assyria, and carry oil to Egypt,* as Isaiah also complained.[5]

Jehovah hath a quarrel with Israel,[6] *and is about to visit upon Jacob his ways; according to his deeds will*

[1] Beer indeed, at the close of a very ingenious analysis of the chapter (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1893, pp. 281 ff.), claims to have proved that it contains "eine wohlgegliederte Rede des Propheten" (p. 292). But he reaches this conclusion only by several forced and precarious arguments. Especially unsound do his pleas appear that in 8*b* לעשק is a play upon the root-meaning of כנען, "lowly"; that כנען, in analogy to the בבטן of ver. 4, is the crude original, the raw material, of the Ephraim of ver. 9; and that כימי מועד is "the determined time" of the coming judgment on Israel.

[2] Something is written about Judah (remember what was said above about Hosea's treble parallels), but the text is too obscure for translation. The theory that it has been altered by a later Judæan writer in favour of his own people is probably correct: the Authorised Version translates in favour of Judah; so too Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel.* But an adverse statement is required by the parallel clauses, and the Hebrew text allows this: *Judah is still wayward with God, and with the Holy One who is faithful.* So virtually Ewald, Hitzig, Wünsche, Nowack and Cheyne. But Cornill and Wellhausen read the second half of the clause as עם־קדשים נצמד, *profanes himself with Qedeshim* (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1887, pp. 286 ff.).

[3] Why should not Hosea, the master of many forced phrases, have also uttered this one? This in answer to Wellhausen.

[4] So LXX., reading שוא for שד.

[5] Isa. xxx. 6.

[6] Heb. *Judah,* but surely Israel is required by the next verse, which is a play upon the two names Israel and Jacob.

He requite him. In the womb he supplanted his brother, and in his man's strength he wrestled with God.[1] *Yea, he wrestled with* the *Angel and prevailed; he wept and besought of Him mercy. At Bethel he met with Him, and there He spake with him*[2] (or *with us*—that is, in the person of our father). . . .[3] *So thou by thy God*—by His help,[4] for no other way is possible except, like thy father, through wrestling with Him—*shouldest return: keep leal love and justice, and wait on thy God without ceasing.*[5] To this passage we shall return in dealing with Hosea's doctrine of Repentance.

In characteristic fashion the discourse now swerves from the ideal to the real state of the people.

Canaan! So the prophet nicknames his mercenary generation.[6] *With false balances in his hand, he loves to defraud. For Ephraim said,* Ah but *I have grown rich, I have won myself wealth.*[7] *None of my gains can touch me with guilt which is sin.*[8] *But I, Jehovah thy God*

[1] *Supplanted* is 'aqab, the presumable root of Ja'aqab (Jacob). *Wrestled with God* is Sarah eth Elohim, the presumable origin of Yisra'el (Israel).

[2] Heb. *us*, LXX. *them*.

[3] Ver. 6—*And Jehovah God of Hosts, Jehovah is His memorial, i.e.* name—is probably an insertion for the reasons mentioned above, pp. 204 f.

[4] This, the most natural rendering of the Hebrew phrase, has been curiously omitted by Beer, who says that באלהיך can only mean *to thy God*. Hitzig: "durch deinen Gott."

[5] Some take these words as addressed by Jehovah at Bethel to the Patriarch.

[6] So nearly all interpreters. Hitzig aptly quotes Polybius, *De Virtute*, L. ix.: διὰ τὴν ἔμφυτον Φοίνιξι πλεονεξίαν, κ.τ.λ. One might also refer to the Romans' idea of the "Punica fides."

[7] Or, full man's strength: cf. ver. 4.

[8] But the LXX. reads: *All his gains shall not be found of him because of the iniquity which he has sinned;* and Wellhausen emends this to: *All his gain sufficeth not for the guilt which it has incurred.*

from the land of Egypt—I could make thee dwell in tents again, as in the days of the Assembly in Horeb—I could destroy all this commercial civilisation of thine, and reduce thee to thine ancient level of nomadic life—*and I spake to the prophets: it was I who multiplied vision, and by the hand of the prophets gave parables. If Gilead* be for *idolatry, then shall it become vanity!* If *in Gilgal*—Stone-Circle—*they sacrifice bullocks,*[1] *stone-heaps shall their altars become among the furrows of the field.* One does not see the connection of these verses with the preceding. But now the discourse oscillates once more to the national father, and the parallel between his own and his people's experience.

And Jacob fled to the land[2] *of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he herded* sheep. *And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was shepherded. And Ephraim hath given bitter provocation; but his blood-guiltiness shall be upon him, and his Lord shall return it to him.*

I cannot trace the argument here.

2 The Last Judgment.

Hosea xiii.—xiv. 1.

The crisis draws on. On the one hand Israel's sin, accumulating, bulks ripe for judgment. On the other the times grow more fatal, or the prophet more than ever feels them so. He will gather once again the old truths on the old lines—the great past when Jehovah was God alone, the descent to the idols and the mushroom monarchs of to-day, the people, who once had been strong, sapped by luxury, forgetful,

[1] Others *to demons.*

[2] Field, but here in sense of territory. See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 79 f.

stupid, not to be roused. The discourse has every mark of being Hosea's latest. There is clearness and definiteness beyond anything since chap. iv. There are ease and lightness of treatment, a playful sarcasm, as if the themes were now familiar both to the prophet and his audience. But, chiefly, there is the passion—so suitable to last words—of how different it all might have been, if to this crisis Israel had come with store of strength instead of guilt. How these years, with their opening into the great history of the world, might have meant a birth for the nation, which instead was lying upon them like a miscarried child in the mouth of the womb! It was a fatality God Himself could not help in. Only death and hell remained. Let them, then, have their way! Samaria must expiate her guilt in the worst horrors of war.

Instead of with one definite historical event, this last effort of Hosea opens more naturally with a summary of all Ephraim's previous history. The tribe had been the first in Israel till they took to idols.

Whenever Ephraim spake there was trembling.[1] *Prince*[2] *was he in Israel; but he fell into guilt through the Ba'al, and so—died. Even now they continue to sin and make them a smelting of their silver, idols after their own model,*[3] *smith's work all of it. To them*—to such things—*they speak! Sacrificing men kiss calves!* In such unreason have they sunk. They cannot endure. *Therefore shall they be like the morning cloud and like the dew that early vanisheth, like chaff which whirleth up from the floor and like smoke from the window. And*

[1] Uncertain.

[2] נשא for נשא.

[3] Read with Ewald כתבנתם. LXX. read כתמונת.

I was thy God[1] *from the land of Egypt; and god besides Me thou knowest not, nor saviour has there been any but Myself. I shepherded*[2] *thee in the wilderness, in the land of droughts*—long before they came among the gods of fertile Canaan. But once they came hither, *the more pasture they had, the more they ate themselves full, and the more they ate themselves full, the more was their heart uplifted, so they forgat Me. So that I must be*[3] *to them like a lion, like a leopard on the way I must leap.*[4] *I will fall on them like a bear robbed of its young, and will tear the caul of their hearts, and will devour them like a lion—wild beasts shall rend them.*[5]

When *He hath destroyed thee, O Israel—who then may help thee?*[6] *Where is thy king now? that he may save thee, or all thy princes? that they may rule thee;*[7] *those of whom thou hast said, Give me a king and princes.* Aye, *I give thee a king in Mine anger, and I take him away in My wrath!* Fit summary of the short and bloody reigns of these last years.

Gathered is Ephraim's guilt, stored up is his sin. The nation is pregnant—but with guilt! *Birth pangs seize him, but*—the figure changes, with Hosea's own swiftness, from mother to child—*he is an impracticable son;*[8]

[1] Here the LXX. makes the insertion noted on pp. 203, 226.

[2] So LXX., רעיתיך.

[3] Read וָאֱהִי.

[4] אֲשׁוּר, usually taken as first fut. of שׁוּר, to lurk. But there is a root of common use in Arabic, sar, to spring up suddenly, of wine into the head or of a lion on its prey; sawâr, "the springer," is one of the Arabic names for lion.

[5] We shall treat this passage later in connection with Hosea's doctrine of the knowledge of God: see pp. 330 f.

[6] After the LXX.

[7] Read with Houtsma וכל שריך וישפטוך.

[8] Literally a *son not wise*, perhaps a name given to children whose birth was difficult.

for this *is no time to stand in the mouth of the womb.* The years that might have been the nation's birth are by their own folly to prove their death. Israel lies in the way of its own redemption—how truly this has been forced home upon them in one chapter after another! Shall God then step in and work a deliverance on the brink of death? *From the hand of Sheol shall I deliver them? from death shall I redeem them?* Nay, let death and Sheol have their way. *Where are thy plagues, O death? where thy destruction, Sheol?* Here with them. *Compassion is hid from Mine eyes.*

This great verse has been very variously rendered. Some have taken it as a promise: *I will deliver . . . I will redeem . . .* So the Septuagint translated, and St. Paul borrowed, not the whole Greek verse, but its spirit and one or two of its terms, for his triumphant challenge to death in the power of the Resurrection of Christ.[1] As it stands in Hosea, however, the verse must be a threat. The last clause unambiguously abjures mercy, and the statement that His people will not be saved, for God cannot save them, is one in thorough harmony with all Hosea's teaching.[2]

An appendix follows with the illustration of the

[1] The LXX. reads: Ποῦ ἡ δίκη σου, θάνατε; ποῦ τὸ κέντρον σου, ᾅδη; But Paul says: Ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ νῖκος; ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον; 1 Cor. xv. 55 (Westcott and Hort's Ed.).

[2] The following is a list of the interpretations of verse 14.

A. Taken as a threat. 1. "It is I who redeemed you from the grip of the grave, and who delivered you from death—but now I will call up the words (*sic*) of death against you; for repentance is hid from My eyes." So Raschi. 2. "I would have redeemed them from the grip of Sheol, etc., if they had been wise, but being foolish I will bring on them the plagues of death." So Kimchi, Eichhorn, Simson, etc. 3. "Should I" or "shall I deliver them from the hand of Sheol,

exact form which doom shall take. As so frequently with Hosea, it opens with a play upon the people's name, which at the same time faintly echoes the opening of the chapter.

Although he among his brethren[1] *is the fruit-bearer*—yaphrî, he Ephraim—*there shall come an east wind, a wind of Jehovah rising from the wilderness, so that his fountain dry up and his spring be parched.* He—*himself*, not the Assyrian, but Menahem, who had to send gold to the Assyrian—*shall strip the treasury of all its precious jewels. Samaria must bear her guilt: for she hath rebelled against her God.* To this simple issue has the impenitence of the people finally reduced the many possibilities of those momentous years; and their last prophet leaves them looking forward to the crash which came some dozen years later in the invasion and captivity of the land. *They shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped up.* Horrible details, but at that period certain to follow every defeat in war.

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redeem them from death?" etc., as in the text above. So Wünsche, Wellhausen, Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*, etc.

B. Taken as a promise. "From the hand of Sheol I will deliver them, from death redeem them," etc. So Umbreit, Ewald, Hitzig and Authorised and Revised English Versions. In this case repentance in the last clause must be taken as *resentment* (Ewald). But, as Ewald sees, the whole verse must then be put in a parenthesis, as an ejaculation of promise in the midst of a context that only threatens. Some without change of word render: "I will be thy plagues, O death? I will be thy sting, O hell." So the Authorised English Version.

[1] Text doubtful.

CHAPTER XX

"I WILL BE AS THE DEW"

HOSEA xiv. 2-10.

LIKE the Book of Amos, the Book of Hosea, after proclaiming the people's inevitable doom, turns to a blessed prospect of their restoration to favour with God. It will be remembered that we decided against the authenticity of such an epilogue in the Book of Amos; and it may now be asked, how can we come to any other conclusion with regard to the similar peroration in the Book of Hosea? For the following reasons.

We decided against the genuineness of the closing verses of Amos, because their sanguine temper is opposed to the temper of the whole of the rest of the book, and because they neither propose any ethical conditions for the attainment of the blessed future, nor in their picture of the latter do they emphasise one single trace of the justice, or the purity, or the social kindliness, on which Amos has so exclusively insisted as the ideal relations of Israel to Jehovah. It seemed impossible to us that Amos could imagine the perfect restoration of his people in the terms only of requickened nature, and say nothing about righteousness, truth and mercy towards the poor. The prospect which now closes his book is psychologically alien to him, and,

being painted in the terms of later prophecy, may be judged to have been added by some prophet of the Exile, speaking from the standpoint, and with the legitimate desires, of his own day.

But the case is very different for this epilogue in Hosea. In the first place, Hosea has not only continually preached repentance, and been, from his whole affectionate temper of mind, unable to believe repentance impossible; but he has actually predicted the restoration of his people upon certain well-defined and ethical conditions. In chap. ii. he has drawn for us in detail the whole prospect of God's successful treatment of his erring spouse. Israel should be weaned from their sensuousness and its accompanying trust in idols by a severe discipline, which the prophet describes in terms of their ancient wanderings in the wilderness. They should be reduced, as at the beginning of their history, to moral converse with their God; and abjuring the Ba'alim (later chapters imply also their foreign allies and foolish kings and princes) should return to Jehovah, when He, having proved that these could not give them the fruits of the land they sought after, should Himself quicken the whole course of nature to bless them with the fertility of the soil and the friendliness even of the wild beasts.

Now in the epilogue and its prospect of Israel's repentance we find no feature, physical or moral, which has not already been furnished by these previous promises of the book. All their ethical conditions are provided; nothing but what they have conceived of blessing is again conceived. Israel is to abjure senseless sacrifice and come to Jehovah with rational and contrite confession.[1] She is to abjure her foreign

[1] Cf. vi. 6, etc.

alliances.[1] She is to trust in the fatherly love of her God.[2] He is to heal her,[3] and His anger is to turn away.[4] He is to restore nature, just as described in chap. ii., and the scenery of the restoration is borrowed from Hosea's own Galilee. There is, in short, no phrase or allusion of which we can say that it is alien to the prophet's style or environment, while the very keynotes of his book—*return, backsliding, idols the work of our hands, such pity as a father hath,* and perhaps even the *answer* or *converse* of verse 9—are all struck once more.

The epilogue then is absolutely different from the epilogue to the Book of Amos, nor can the present expositor conceive of the possibility of a stronger case for the genuineness of any passage of Scripture. The sole difficulty seems to be the place in which we find it—a place where its contradiction to the immediately preceding sentence of doom is brought out into relief. We need not suppose, however, that it was uttered by Hosea in immediate proximity to the latter, nor even that it formed his last word to Israel. But granting only (as the above evidence obliges us to do) that it is the prophet's own, this fourteenth chapter may have been a discourse addressed by him at one of those many points when, as we know, he had some hope of the people's return. Personally, I should think it extremely likely that Hosea's ministry closed with that final, hopeless proclamation in chap. xiii.: no other conclusion was possible so near the fall of Samaria, and the absolute destruction of the Northern Kingdom. But Hosea had already in chap. ii. painted the very

[1] Cf. xii. 2, etc.
[2] Cf. i. 7; ii. 22, 25.
[3] Cf. xi. 4.
[4] Cf. xi. 8, 9.

opposite issue as a possible ideal for his people; and during some break in those years when their insincerity was less obtrusive, and the final doom still uncertain, the prophet's heart swung to its natural pole in the exhaustless and steadfast love of God, and he uttered his unmingled gospel. That either himself or the unknown editor of his prophecies should have placed it at the very end of his book is not less than what we might have expected. For if the book were to have validity beyond the circumstances of its origin, beyond the judgment which was so near and so inevitable, was it not right to let something else than the proclamation of this latter be its last word to men? was it not right to put as the conclusion of the whole matter the ideal eternally valid for Israel—the gospel which is ever God's last word to His people?[1]

At some point or other, then, in the course of his ministry, there was granted to Hosea an open vision like to the vision which he has recounted in the second chapter. He called on the people to repent. For

[1] Since preparing the above for the press there has come into my hands Professor Cheyne's "Introduction" to the new edition of Robertson Smith's *The Prophets of Israel*, in which (p. xix.) he reaches with regard to Hosea xiv. 2-10 conclusions entirely opposite to those reached above. Professor Cheyne denies the passage to Hosea on the grounds that it is akin in language and imagery and ideas to writings of the age which begins with Jeremiah, and which among other works includes the Song of Songs. But, as has been shown above, the "language, imagery and ideas" are all akin to what Professor Cheyne admits to be genuine prophecies of Hosea; and the likeness to them of, *e.g.*, Jer. xxxi. 10-20 may be explained on the same ground as so much else in Jeremiah, by the influence of Hosea. The allusion in ver. 3 suits Hosea's own day more than Jeremiah's. Nor can I understand what Professor Cheyne means by this: "The spirituality of the tone of vers. 1-3 is indeed surprising (contrast the picture in Hos. v. 6)." Spirituality surprising in the

once, and in the power of that Love to which he had already said all things are possible, it seemed to him as if repentance came. The tangle and intrigue of his generation fell away; fell away the reeking sacrifices and the vain show of worship. The people turned from their idols and puppet-kings, from Assyria and from Egypt, and with contrite hearts came to God Himself, who, healing and loving, opened to them wide the gates of the future. It is not strange that down this spiritual vista the prophet should see the same scenery as daily filled his bodily vision. Throughout Galilee Lebanon[1] dominates the landscape. You cannot lift your eyes from any spot of Northern Israel without resting them upon the vast mountain. From the unhealthy jungles of the Upper Jordan, the pilgrim lifts his heart to the cool hill air above, to the ever-green cedars and firs, to the streams and waterfalls that drop like silver chains off the great breastplate of snow. From Esdraelon and every plain the peasants look to Lebanon to store the clouds and scatter the rain; it is not from heaven but from Hermon that they expect the dew,

book that contains "I will have love and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings"! The verse, v. 6, he would contrast with xiv. 1-3 is actually one in which Hosea says that when they go "with flocks and herds" Israel shall not find God! He says that "to understand Hosea aright we must omit it" (*i.e.* the whole epilogue). But after the argument I have given above it will be plain that if we "understand Hosea aright" we have every reason *not* "to omit it." His last contention, that "to have added anything to the stern warning in xiii. 16 would have robbed it of half its force," is fully met by the considerations stated above on p. 310.

[1] By Lebanon in the fourteenth chapter and almost always in the Old Testament we must understand not the western range now called Lebanon, for that makes no impression on the Holy Land, its bulk lying too far to the north, but Hermon, the southmost and highest summits of Anti-Lebanon. See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 417 f.

their only hope in the long drought of summer. Across Galilee and in Northern Ephraim, across Bashan and in Northern Gilead, across Hauran and on the borders of the desert, the mountain casts its spell of power, its lavish promise of life.[1] Lebanon is everywhere the summit of the land, and there are points from which it is as dominant as heaven.

No wonder then that our northern prophet painted the blessed future in the poetry of the Mountain—its air, its dew and its trees. Other seers were to behold, in the same latter days, the mountain of the Lord above the tops of the mountains; the ordered city, her steadfast walls salvation, and her open gates praise; the wealth of the Gentiles flowing into her, profusion of flocks for sacrifice, profusion of pilgrims; the great Temple and its solemn services; and *the glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, fir-tree and pine and box-tree together, to beautify the place of My Sanctuary.*[2] But, with his home in the north, and weary of sacrifice and ritual, weary of everything artificial whether it were idols or puppet-kings, Hosea turns to the *glory of Lebanon* as it lies, untouched by human tool or art, fresh and full of peace from God's own hand. Like that other seer of Galilee, Hosea in his vision of the future *saw no temple therein.*[3] His sacraments are the open air, the mountain breeze, the dew, the vine, the lilies, the pines; and what God asks of men are not rites nor sacrifices, but life and health, fragrance and fruitfulness, beneath the shadow and the Dew of His Presence.

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[1] Full sixty miles off, in the Jebel Druze, the ancient Greek amphitheatres were so arranged that Hermon might fill the horizon of the spectators.

[2] Isa. lx. 13.

[3] Revelation of St. John xxi. 22.

Return, O Israel, to Jehovah thy God, for thou hast stumbled by thine iniquity. Take with you words[1] *and return unto Jehovah. Say unto Him, Remove iniquity altogether, and take good, so will we render the calves*[2] *of our lips* ; confessions, vows, these are the sacrificial offerings God delights in. Which vows are now registered :—

Asshur shall not save us ;
We will not ride upon horses (from Egypt) ;
And we will say no more, "O our God," to the work of our hands :
For in Thee the fatherless findeth a father's pity.

Alien help, whether in the protection of Assyria or the cavalry which Pharaoh sends in return for Israel's homage ; alien gods, whose idols we have ourselves made,—we abjure them all, for we remember how Thou didst promise to show a father's love to the people whom Thou didst name, for their mother's sins, Lo-Ruhamah, the Unfathered. Then God replies :—

I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely :
For Mine anger is turned away from them.
I will be as the dew unto Israel :
He shall blossom as the lily,
And strike his roots deep *as Lebanon ;*
His branches shall spread,
And his beauty shall be as the olive-tree,
And his smell as Lebanon—

smell of clear mountain air with the scent of the

[1] On all this exhortation see below, p. 343.
[2] LXX. *fruit*, פרי for פרים ; the whole verse is obscure.

pines upon it. The figure in the end of ver. 6 seems forced to some critics, who have proposed various emendations, such as "like the fast-rooted trees of Lebanon,"[1] but any one who has seen how the mountain himself rises from great roots, cast out across the land like those of some giant oak, will not feel it necessary to mitigate the metaphor.

The prophet now speaks:—

They shall return and dwell in His shadow.
They shall live well-watered as a garden,
Till they flourish like the vine,
And be fragrant like the wine of Lebanon.[2]

God speaks:—

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[1] So Guthe; some other plant Wellhausen, who for ויך reads וילכו.

[2] Ver. 8 obviously needs emendation. The Hebrew text contains at least one questionable construction, and gives no sense: "They that dwell in his shadow shall turn, and revive corn and flourish like the vine, and his fame," etc. To cultivate corn and be themselves like a vine is somewhat mixed. The LXX. reads: *ἐπιστρέψουσιν καὶ καθιοῦνται ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην αὐτοῦ, ζήσονται καὶ μεθυσθήσονται σίτῳ· καὶ ἐξανθήσει ἄμπελος μνημόσυνην αὐτοῦ ὡς οἶνος Λιβάνου.* It removes the grammatical difficulty from clause 1, which then reads יָשֻׁבוּ וְיָשְׁבוּ בְצִלּוֹ; the supplied *vau* may easily have dropped after the final *vau* of the previous word. In the 2nd clause the LXX. takes יהיו as an intransitive, which is better suited to the other verbs, and adds *καὶ μεθυσθήσονται*, ורוו (a form that may have easily slipped from the Hebrew text, through its likeness to the preceding ויהיו). *And they shall be well-watered.* After this it is probable that דגן should read בַּגָּן. In the 3rd clause the Hebrew text may stand. In the 4th זכר may not, as many propose, be taken for זכרם and translated *their perfume*; but the parallelism makes it now probable that we have a verb here; and if זכר in the Hiph. has the sense *to make a perfume* (cf. Isa. lxvi. 3), there is no reason against the Kal being used in the intransitive sense here. In the LXX. for *μεθυσθήσονται* Q^a reads *στηριχθήσονται.*

Ephraim, what has he[1] *to do any more with idols!*
I have spoken for him, *and I will look after him.*
I am like an ever-green fir;
From Me is thy fruit found.

This version is not without its difficulties; but the alternative that God is addressed and Ephraim is the speaker—*Ephraim* says, *What have I to do any more with idols? I answer and look to Him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is Thy fruit found*—has even greater difficulties,[2] although it avoids the unusual comparison of the Deity with a tree. The difficulties of both interpretations may be overcome by dividing the verse between God and the people :—

Ephraim! what has he to do any more with idols:
I have spoken for him, *and will look after him.*

In this case the *speaking* would be intended in the same sense as the *speaking* in chap. ii. to the heavens and earth, that they might *speak* to the *corn and wine*.[3] Then Ephraim replies :—

I am like an ever-green fir-tree;
From me is Thy fruit found.

[1] LXX.

[2] This alternative, which Robertson Smith adopted, "though not without some hesitation" (*Prophets*, 413) is that which follows the Hebrew text, reading in the first clause לִי, and not, like LXX., לוֹ, and avoids the unusual figure of comparing Jehovah to a tree. But it does not account for the singular emphasis laid in the second clause on the first personal pronoun, and implies that God, whose name has not for several verses been mentioned, is meant by the mere personal suffix, "I will look to Him." Wellhausen suggests changing the second clause to *I am his Anat and his Aschera.*

[3] ענה, ii. 23.

But the division appears artificial, and the text does not suggest that the two *I*'s belong to different speakers. The first version therefore is the preferable.

Some one has added a summons to later generations to lay this book to heart in face of their own problems and sins. May we do so for ourselves!

Who is wise, that he understands these things?
Intelligent, that he knows them?
Yea, straight are the ways of Jehovah,
And the righteous shall walk therein, but sinners
shall stumble upon them.

CHAPTER XXI

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Hosea *passim.*

WE have now finished the translation and detailed exposition of Hosea's prophecies. We have followed his minute examination of his people's character; his criticism of his fickle generation's attempts to repent; and his presentation of true religion in contrast to their shallow optimism and sensual superstitions. We have seen an inwardness and spirituality of the highest kind—a love not only warm and mobile, but nobly jealous, and in its jealousy assisted by an extraordinary insight and expertness in character. Why Hosea should be distinguished above all prophets for inwardness and spirituality must by this time be obvious to us. From his remote watchfulness, Amos had seen the nations move across the world as the stars across heaven; had seen, within Israel, class distinct from class, and given types of all: rich and poor; priest, merchant and judge; the panic-stricken, the bully; the fraudulent and the unclean. The observatory of Amos was the world, and the nation. But Hosea's was the home; and there he had watched a human soul decay through every stage from innocence to corruption. It was a husband's study of a wife which made Hosea the most inward of all the prophets. This was *the beginning of God's word by him.*[1]

[1] i. 2.

Among the subjects in the subtle treatment of which Hosea's service to religion is most original and conspicuous, there are especially three that deserve a more detailed treatment than we have been able to give them. These are the Knowledge of God, Repentance and the Sin against Love. We may devote a chapter to each of them, beginning in this with the most characteristic and fundamental truth Hosea gave to religion—the Knowledge of God.

If to the heart there be one pain more fatal than another, it is the pain of not being understood. That prevents argument: how can you reason with one who will not come to quarters with your real self? It paralyses influence: how can you do your best with one who is blind to your best? It stifles Love; for how dare she continue to speak when she is mistaken for something else? Here as elsewhere "against stupidity the gods themselves fight in vain."

This anguish Hosea had suffered. As closely as two souls may live on earth, he had lived with Gomer. Yet she had never wakened to his worth. She must have been a woman with a power of love, or such a heart had hardly wooed her. He was a man of deep tenderness and exquisite powers of expression. His tact, his delicacy, his enthusiasm are sensible in every chapter of his book. Gomer must have tasted them all before Israel did. Yet she never knew him. It was her curse that, being married, she was not awake to the meaning of marriage, and, being married to Hosea, she never appreciated the holy tenderness and heroic patience which were deemed by God not unworthy of becoming a parable of His own.

Now I think we do not go far wrong if we conclude that it was partly this long experience of a soul that loved, but had neither conscience nor ideal in her love, which made Hosea lay such frequent and pathetic emphasis upon Israel's *ignorance* of Jehovah. To have his character ignored, his purposes baffled, his gifts unappreciated, his patience mistaken—this was what drew Hosea into that wonderful sympathy with the heart of God towards Israel which comes out in such passionate words as these: *My people perish for lack of knowledge.*[1] *There is no troth, nor leal love, nor knowledge of God in the land.*[2] *They have not known the Lord.*[3] *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine.*[4] *They knew not that I healed them.*[5] *For now, because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee.*[6] *I will have leal love and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.*[7] Repentance consists in change of knowledge. And the climax of the new life which follows is again knowledge: *I will betroth thee to Me, and thou shalt know the Lord.*[8] *Israel shall cry, My God, we know Thee.*[9]

To understand what Hosea meant by knowledge we must examine the singularly supple word which his language lent him to express it. The Hebrew root "Yadhʿa,"[10] almost exclusively rendered in the Old Testament by the English verb to know, is employed of the many processes of knowledge, for which richer languages have separate terms. It is by turns to perceive, be aware of, recognise, understand or conceive,

[1] iv. 6.
[2] iv. 1.
[3] v. 4.
[4] ii. 10.
[5] xi. 3.
[6] iv. 6.
[7] vi. 6.
[8] ii. 22.
[9] viii. 2.
[10] ידע.

experience and be expert in.[1] But there is besides nearly always a practical effectiveness, and in connection with religious objects a moral consciousness.

The barest meaning is to be aware that something is present or has happened, and perhaps the root meant simply to see.[2] But it was the frequent duty of the prophets to mark the difference between perceiving a thing and laying it to heart. Isaiah speaks of the people *seeing*, but not so as *to know*;[3] and Deuteronomy renders the latter sense by adding *with the heart*, which to the Hebrews was the seat, not of the feeling, but of the practical intellect:[4] *And thou knowest with thy heart that as a man chastiseth his son, so the Lord your God chastiseth you.*[5] Usually, however, the word *know* suffices by itself. This practical vigour naturally developed in such directions as *intimacy*, *conviction*, *experience* and *wisdom*. Job calls his familiars *my knowers*;[6] of a strong conviction he says, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*,[7] and referring to wisdom, *We are of yesterday and know not*;[8] while Ecclesiastes says, *Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know*—that is, *experience*, or *suffer—no evil*.[9] But the verb rises into a practical sense—to the knowledge that leads a man to regard or care for its object. Job uses the verb *know* when he would say, *I do not care for my life*;[10] and in

[1] The Latin *videre, scire, noscere, cognoscere, intelligere, sapere* and *peritus esse.*

[2] Cf. the Greek οἶδα from εἰδειν.

[3] vi. 9.

[4] See above, pp. 258, 275; and below, p. 323.

[5] viii. 5: cf. xxix. 3 (Eng. 4), *Jehovah did not give you a heart to know.*

[6] Job xix. 13: still more close, of course, the intimacy between the sexes for which the verb is so often used in the Old Testament.

[7] xix. 25: cf. Gen. xx. 6.

[8] viii. 9. [9] viii. 5: cf. Hosea ix. 7. [10] ix. 21.

the description of the sons of Eli, that *they were sons of Belial, and did not know God*, it means that they did not have any regard for Him.[1] Finally, there is a moral use of the word in which it approaches the meaning of conscience: *Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*[2] They were aware of this before, but they felt it now with a new sense. Also it is the mark of the awakened and the fullgrown to know, or to feel, the difference between good and evil.[3]

Here, then, we have a word for *knowing*, the utterance of which almost invariably starts a moral echo, whose very sound, as it were, is haunted by sympathy and by duty. It is knowledge, not as an effort of, so much as an effect upon, the mind. It is not *to know* so as to see the fact of, but *to know* so as to feel the force of; knowledge, not as acquisition and mastery, but as impression, passion. To quote Paul's distinction, it is not so much the apprehending as the being apprehended. It leads to a vivid result—either warm appreciation or change of mind or practical effort. It is sometimes the talent conceived as the trust, sometimes the enlistment of all the affections. It is knowledge that is followed by shame, or by love, or by reverence, or by the sense of a duty. One sees that it closely approaches the meaning of our "conscience," and understands how easily there was developed from it the evangelical name for repentance, Metanoia—that is, change of mind under a new impression of facts.

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[1] 1 Sam. ii. 12. A similar meaning is probably to be attached to the word in Gen. xxxix. 6: Potiphar *had no thought* or *care for anything* that was in Joseph's hand. Cf. Prov. ix. 13; xxvii. 23 Job xxxv. 15.

[2] Gen. iii. 7. [3] Gen. iii. 5; Isa. vii. 15, etc.

There are three writers who thus use knowledge as the key to the Divine life—in the Old Testament Hosea and the author of Deuteronomy, in the New Testament St. John. We likened Amos to St. John the Baptist: it is not only upon his similar temperament, but far more upon his use of the word knowledge for spiritual purposes, that we may compare Hosea to St. John the Evangelist.

Hosea's chief charge against the people is one of stupidity. High and low they are *a people without intelligence*.[1] Once he defines this as want of political wisdom: *Ephraim is a silly dove without heart*, or, as we should say, *without brains*;[2] and again, as insensibility to every ominous fact: *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are scattered upon him, and he knoweth it not*,[3] or, as we should say, *lays it not to heart*.

But Israel's most fatal ignorance is of God Himself. This is the sign and the cause of every one of their defects. *There is no troth, nor leal love, nor knowledge of God in the land*.[4] *They have not known the LORD*.[5] *They have not known Me*.

With the causes of this ignorance the prophet has dealt most explicitly in the fourth chapter.[6] They are two: the people's own vice and the negligence of their priests. Habitual vice destroys a people's brains. *Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the heart of My people*.[7] Lust, for instance, blinds them to the domestic

[1] iv. 14, עם לא־יבין: if the original meaning of בין be to *get between*, *see through* or *into*, so *discriminate*, *understand*, then intelligence is its etymological equivalent.

[2] vii. 11. See above, p. 321, *n.* 4.

[3] vii. 9.

[4] iv. 1.

[5] v. 4.

[6] For exposition of this chapter see above, pp. 256 ff.

[7] iv. 11, 12, LXX.

consequences of their indulgence in the heathen worship, *and so the stupid people come to their end.*[1] Again, their want of political wisdom is due to their impurity, drunkenness and greed to be rich.[2] Let those take heed who among ourselves insist that art is independent of moral conditions—that wit and fancy reach their best and bravest when breaking from any law of decency. They lie: such licence corrupts the natural intelligence of a people, and robs them of insight and imagination.

Yet Hosea sees that all the fault does not lie with the common people. Their teachers are to blame, priest and prophet alike, for both *stumble*, and it is true that a people shall be like its priests.[3] *The* priests *have rejected knowledge and forgotten the Torah* of their God; they think only of the ritual of sacrifice and the fines by which they fill their mouths. It was, as we have seen, *the* sin of Israel's religion in the eighth century. To the priests religion was a mass of ceremonies which satisfied the people's superstitions and kept themselves in bread. To the prophets it was an equally sensuous, an equally mercenary ecstasy. But to Hosea religion is above all a thing of the intellect and conscience: it is that *knowing* which is at once common-sense, plain morality and the recognition by a pure heart of what God has done and is doing in history. Of such a knowledge the priests and prophets are the stewards, and it is because they have ignored their trust that the people have been provided with no antidote to the vices that corrupt their natural intelligence and make them incapable of seeing God.

[1] iv. 14 f. See above, pp. 258 f. [2] vii. *passim*.
[3] iv. 4-9. Above, pp. 257 f.

In contrast to such ignorance Hosea describes the essential temper and contents of a true understanding of God. Using the word *knowledge*, in the passive sense characteristic of his language, not so much the acquisition as the impression of facts, an impression which masters not only a man's thoughts but his heart and will, Hosea describes the *knowledge of God* as feeling, character and conscience. Again and again he makes it parallel to loyalty, repentance, love and service. Again and again he emphasises that it comes from God Himself. It is not something which men can reach by their own endeavours, or by the mere easy turning of their fickle hearts. For it requires God Himself to speak, and discipline to chasten. The only passage in which the knowledge of God is described as the immediate prize of man's own pursuit is that prayer of the people on whose facile religiousness Hosea pours his scorn.[1] *Let us know, let us follow on to know the Lord*, he heard them say, and promise themselves, *As soon as we seek Him we shall find Him.* But God replies that He can make nothing of such ambitions; they will pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew.[2] This discarded prayer, then, is the only passage in the book in which the knowledge of God is described as man's acquisition. Elsewhere, in strict conformity to the temper of the Hebrew word to know, Hosea presents the knowledge of the Most High, not as something man finds out for himself, but something which comes down on him from above.

The means which God took to impress Himself upon the heart of His people were, according to Hosea, the

[1] vi. 1 ff. See above, pp. 263 ff. [2] vi. 4.

events of their history. Hosea, indeed, also points to another means. *The Torah of thy God*, which in one passage[1] he makes parallel to *knowledge*, is evidently the body of instruction, judicial, ceremonial and social, which has come down by the tradition of the priests. This was not all oral; part of it at least was already codified in the form we now know as the Book of the Covenant.[2] But Hosea treats of the Torah only in connection with the priests. And the far more frequent and direct means by which God has sought to reveal Himself to the people are the great events of their past. These Hosea never tires of recalling. More than any other prophet, he recites the deeds done by God in the origins and making of Israel. So numerous are his references that from them alone we could almost rebuild the early history. Let us gather them together. The nation's father Jacob *in the womb overreached his brother, and in his manhood strove with God; yea, he strove with the Angel and he overcame,*[3] *he wept and supplicated Him; at Bethel he found Him, and there He spake with us—Jehovah God of Hosts, Jehovah is His name.*[4]

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[1] iv. 6. See above, p. 257.

[2] See above, pp. 97 f. On the other doubtful phrase, viii. 12—literally *I write multitudes of My Torah, as a stranger they have reckoned it*—no argument can be built; for even if we take the first clause as conditional and render, *Though I wrote multitudes of My Torôth, yet as those of a stranger they would regard them*, that would not necessarily mean that no Torôth of Jehovah were yet written, but, on the contrary, might equally well imply that some at least had been written.

[3] Or *was overcome.*

[4] xii. 4-6. See above, p. 302. LXX. reads *they supplicated Me . . . they found Me . . . He spoke with them.* Many propose to read the last clause *with him.* The passage is obscure. Note the order of the events—the wrestling at Peniel, the revelation at Bethel, then in

. . . And Jacob fled to the territory[1] *of Aram, and he served for a wife, and for a wife he tended sheep. And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was tended.*[2] *When Israel was young,*[3] *then I came to love him, and out of Egypt I called My son.*[4] *As often as I called to them, so often did they go from Me:*[5] *they to the Baʿalim kept sacrificing, and to images offering incense. But I taught Ephraim to walk, taking him upon Mine*[6] *arms, and they did not know that I nursed them.*[7] *. . . Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, like the firstfruits on an early fig-tree I saw your fathers;* but *they went to Baʿal-Peor, and consecrated themselves to the Shame.*[8] *. . . But I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt, and gods besides Me thou knowest not, and Saviour there is none but Me. I knew thee in the wilderness, in the land of burning heats. But the more pasture they had, the more they fed themselves full; as they fed themselves full their heart was lifted up: therefore they forgat Me.*[9] *. . . I Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt.*[10] And all this revelation of God was not only in that marvellous

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the subsequent passage the flight to Aram. This however does not prove that in Hosea's information the last happened after the two first.

[1] שָׂדֶה, *field*, here used in its political sense: cf. *Hist. Geog.*, p. 79. Our word *country*, now meaning territory and now the rural as opposed to the urban districts, is strictly analogous to the Hebrew *field*.

[2] xii. 13, 14.

[3] *A youth.*

[4] LXX., followed by many critics, *his sons*. But *My son* is a better parallel to *young* in the preceding clause. Or trans.: *to be My son*.

[5] So LXX. See p. 293.

[6] So rightly LXX.

[7] xi. 1-3.

[8] ix. 10.

[9] xiii. 4-6.

[10] xii. 10. Other references to the ancient history are the story of Gibeah and the Valley of Achor.

history, but in the yearly gifts of nature and even in the success of the people's commerce : *She knew not that it was I who have given her the corn and the wine and the oil, and silver have I multiplied to her.*[1]

This, then, is how God gave Israel knowledge of Himself. *First* it broke upon the Individual, the Nation's Father. And to him it had not come by miracle, but just in the same fashion as it has broken upon men from then until now. He woke to find God no tradition, but an experience. Amid the strife with others of which life for all so largely consists, Jacob became aware that God also has to be reckoned with, and that, hard as is the struggle for bread and love and justice with one's brethren and fellow-men, with the Esaus and with the Labans, a more inevitable wrestle awaits the soul when it is left alone in the darkness with the Unseen. Oh, this is our sympathy with those early patriarchs, not that they saw the sea dry up before them or the bush ablaze with God, but that upon some lonely battle-field of the heart they also endured those moments of agony, which imply a more real Foe than we ever met in flesh and blood, and which leave upon us marks deeper than the waste of toil or the rivalry of the world can inflict. So the Father of the Nation came to *find* God at Bethel, and there, adds Hosea, where the Nation still worship, God *spake with us* [2] in the person of our Father.

The *second* stage of the knowledge of God was when the Nation awoke to His leading, and *through a prophet*, Moses, were *brought up out of Egypt*. Here again no miracle is adduced by Hosea, but with full heart he appeals to the grace and the tenderness of the whole

[1] ii. 10. [2] See above, p. 302.

story. To him it is a wonderful romance. Passing by all the empires of earth, the Almighty chose for Himself this people that was no people, this tribe that were the slaves of Egypt. And the choice was of love only: *When Israel was young I came to love him, and out of Egypt I called My son.* It was the adoption of a little slave-boy, adoption by the heart; and the fatherly figure continues, *I taught Ephraim to walk, taking him upon Mine arms.* It is just the same charm, seen from another point of view, when Hosea hears God say that He had *found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, like the firstfruits on an early fig-tree I saw your fathers.*

Now these may seem very imperfect figures of the relation of God to this one people, and the ideas they present may be felt to start more difficulties than ever their poetry could soothe to rest: as, for instance, why Israel alone was chosen—why this of all tribes was given such an opportunity to know the Most High. With these questions prophecy does not deal, and for Israel's sake had no need to deal. What alone Hosea is concerned with is the Character discernible in the origin and the liberation of his people. He hears that Character speak for itself; and it speaks of a love and of a joy, to find figures for which it goes to childhood and to spring—to the love a man feels for a child, to the joy a man feels at the sight of the firstfruits of the year. As the human heart feels in those two great dawns, when nothing is yet impossible, but all is full of hope and promise, so humanly, so tenderly, so joyfully had God felt towards His people. Never again say that the gods of Greece were painted more living or more fair! The God of Israel is Love and Springtime to His people. Grace, patience, pure joy of hope and possibility—these are the Divine elements which this

spiritual man, Hosea, sees in the early history of his people, and not the miraculous, about which, from end to end of his book, he is utterly silent.

It is ignorance, then, of such a Character, so evident in these facts of their history, with which Hosea charges his people—not ignorance of the facts themselves, not want of devotion to their memory, for they are a people who crowd the sacred scenes of the past, at Bethel, at Gilgal, at Beersheba, but ignorance of the Character which shines through the facts. Hosea also calls it forgetfulness, for the people once had knowledge.[1] The cause of their losing it has been their prosperity in Canaan: *As their pastures were increased they grew satisfied; as they grew satisfied their heart was lifted up, and therefore they forgat Me.*[2]

Equally instructive is the method by which Hosea seeks to move Israel from this oblivion and bring them to a true knowledge of God. He insists that their recovery can only be the work of God Himself—the living God working in their lives to-day as He did in the past of the nation. To those past deeds it is useless for this generation to go back, and seek again the memory of which they have disinherited themselves. Let them rather realise that the same God still lives. The knowledge of Him may be recovered by appreciating His deeds in the life of to-day. And these deeds must first of all be violence and terror, if only to rouse them from their sensuous sloth. The last verse we have quoted, about Israel's complacency and pride, is followed by this terrible one: *I shall be*[3] *to them like a lion, like a*

[1] iv. 6.
[2] xiii. 5.
[3] With Wellhausen read אֶהְיֶה for וָאֶהִי.

leopard I shall leap[1] *upon the way. I will meet them as a bear bereft* of her cubs, *that I may tear the caul of their heart, that I may devour them there like a lion: the wild beast shall rend them.*[2] This means that into Israel's insensibility to Himself God must break with facts, with wounds, with horrors they cannot evade. Till He so acts, their own efforts, *then shall we know if we hunt up to know,*[3] and their assurance, *My God, we do know Thee,*[4] are very vain. Hosea did not speak for nothing. Events were about to happen more momentous than even the Exodus and the Conquest of the Land. By 734 the Assyrians had depopulated Gilead and Galilee; in 725 the capital itself was invested, and by 721 the whole nation carried into captivity. God had made Himself known.

We are already aware, however, that Hosea did not count this as God's final revelation to His people. Doom is not doom to him, as it was to Amos, but discipline; and God withdraws His people from their fascinating land only that He may have them more closely to Himself. He will bring His Bride into the wilderness again, the wilderness where they first met, and there, when her soul is tender and her stupid heart broken, He will plant in her again the seeds of His knowledge and His love. The passages which describe this are among the most beautiful of the book. They tell us of no arbitrary conquest of Israel by Jehovah, of no magic and sudden transformation. They describe a process as natural and gentle as a human wooing; they use, as we have seen, the very terms of this: *I will woo her, bring her into the wilder-*

[1] See above, p. 305, *n.* 4.
[2] xiii. 7 ff.
[3] vi. 3.
[4] viii. 2.

ness, and speak home to her heart. . . . And it shall be in that day that thou shalt call Me, My husband, . . . and I will betroth thee to Me for ever in righteousness and in justice, and in leal love and in mercies and in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah.[1]

[1] i. 16, 18, 21, 22.

CHAPTER XXII

REPENTANCE

HOSEA *passim.*

IF we keep in mind what Hosea meant by knowledge —a new impression of facts implying a change both of temper and of conduct—we shall feel how natural it is to pass at once from his doctrine of knowledge to his doctrine of repentance. Hosea may be accurately styled the first preacher of repentance yet so thoroughly did he deal with this subject of eternal interest to the human heart, that between him and ourselves almost no teacher has increased the insight with which it has been examined, or the passion with which it ought to be enforced.

One thing we must hold clear from the outset. To us repentance is intelligible only in the individual. There is no motion of the heart which more clearly derives its validity from its personal character. Repentance is the conscience, the feeling, the resolution of a man by himself and for himself—"*I* will arise and go to my Father." Yet it is not to the individual that Hosea directs his passionate appeals. For him and his age the religious unit was not the Israelite but Israel. God had called and covenanted with the nation as a whole ; He had revealed Himself through their historical fortunes and institutions. His grace

was shown in their succour and guidance as a people; His last judgment was threatened in their destruction as a state. So similarly, when by Hosea God calls to repentance, it is the whole nation whom He addresses.

At the same time we must remember those qualifications which we adduced with regard to Hosea's doctrine of the nation's knowledge of God.[1] They affect also his doctrine of the national repentance. Hosea's experience of Israel had been preceded by his experience of an Israelite. For years the prophet had carried on his anxious heart a single human character—lived with her, travailed for her, pardoned and redeemed her. As we felt that this long cure of a soul must have helped Hosea to his very spiritual sense of the knowledge of God, so now we may justly assume that the same cannot have been without effect upon his very personal teaching about repentance. But with his experience of Gomer, there conspired also his intense love for Israel. A warm patriotism necessarily personifies its object. To the passionate lover of his people, their figure rises up one and individual—his mother, his lover, his wife. Now no man ever loved his people more intimately or more tenderly than Hosea loved Israel. The people were not only dear to him, because he was their son, but dear and vivid also for their loneliness and their distinction among the peoples of the earth, and for their long experience as the intimate of the God of grace and lovingkindness. God had chosen this Israel as His Bride; and the remembrance of the unique endowment and lonely destiny stimulated Hosea's imagination in the work of personifying and individualising his people. He treats

[1] See above, p. 320.

Israel with the tenderness and particularity with which the Shepherd, leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness, seeks till He find it the one lost lamb. His analysis of his fickle generation's efforts to repent, of their motives in turning to God, and of their failures, is as inward and definite as if it were a single heart he were dissecting. Centuries have passed; the individual has displaced the nation; the experience of the human heart has been infinitely increased, and prophecy and all preaching has grown more and more personal. Yet it has scarcely ever been found either necessary to add to the terms which Hosea used for repentance, or possible to go deeper in analysing the processes which these denote.

Hosea's most simple definition of repentance is that *of returning unto God.* For *turning* and *re-turning* the Hebrew language has only one verb—shûbh. In the Book of Hosea there are instances in which it is employed in the former sense;[1] but, even apart from its use for repentance, the verb usually means to return. Thus the wandering wife in the second chapter says, *I will return to my former husband;*[2] and in the threat of judgment it is said, *Ephraim will return to Egypt.*[3] Similar is the sense in the phrases *His deeds will I turn back upon him*[4] and *I will not turn back to destroy Ephraim.*[5] The usual meaning of the verb is therefore, not merely to turn or change, but to turn right round,

[1] vii. 16, *They turn, but not upwards*; xiv. 5, *Mine anger is turned away.*

[2] ii. 9.

[3] viii. 13; ix. 3; xi. 5.

[4] iv. 9: cf. xii. 3, 15.

[5] xi. 9: cf. ii. 11.

to turn back and home.[1] This is obviously the force of its employment to express repentance. For this purpose Hosea very seldom uses it alone.[2] He generally adds either the name by which God had always been known, Jehovah,[3] or the designation of Him, as *their own God.*[4]

We must emphasise this point if we would appreciate the thoroughness of our prophet's doctrine, and its harmony with the preaching of the New Testament. To Hosea repentance is no mere change in the direction of one's life. It is a turning back upon one's self, a retracing of one's footsteps, a confession and acknowledgment of what one has abandoned. It is a coming back and a coming home to God, exactly as Jesus Himself has described in the Parable of the Prodigal. As Hosea again and again affirms, the Return to God, like the New Testament Metanoia, is the effect of new knowledge ; but the new knowledge is not of new facts —it is of facts which have been present for a long time and which ought to have been appreciated before.

Of these facts Hosea describes three kinds: the nation's misery, the unspeakable grace of their God, and their great guilt in turning from Him. Again it is as in the case of the prodigal: his hunger, his father,

[1] This may be further seen in the very common phrase שוב שבות עמי, *to turn again* the captivity of My people (see Hosea vi. 11) ; or in the use of שוב in xiv. 8, where it has the force, auxiliary to the other verb in the clause, of repeating or coming back to do a thing But the text here needs emendation : cf. above, p. 315. Cf. Amos' use of the Hiphil form to *draw back, withdraw*, i. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13 ; ii. 1, 4, 6.

[2] Cf. xi. 5, *they refused to return.*

[3] vi. 1, *Come and let us return to Jehovah ;* vii. 10, *They did not return to Jehovah ;* xiv. 2, 3, *Return, O Israel, to Jehovah.*

[4] iii. 5, *They shall return and seek Jehovah their God ;* v. 4, *Their deeds do not allow them to return to their God.*

and his cry, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight."

We have already felt the pathos of those passages in which Hosea describes the misery and the decay of Israel, the unprofitableness and shame of all their restless traffic with other gods and alien empires. The state is rotten;[1] anarchy prevails.[2] The national vitality is lessened: *Ephraim hath grey hairs.*[3] Power of birth and begetting have gone; the universal unchastity causes the population to diminish: *their glory flieth away like a bird.*[4] The presents to Egypt,[5] the tribute to Assyria, drain the wealth of the people: *strangers devour his strength.*[6] The prodigal Israel has his far-off country where he spends his substance among strangers. It is in this connection that we must take the repeated verse: *the pride of Israel testifieth to his face.*[7] We have seen[8] the impossibility of the usual exegesis of these words, that by *the Pride of Israel* Hosea means Jehovah; the word "pride" is probably to be taken in the sense in which Amos employs it of the exuberance and arrogance of Israel's civilisation. If we are right, then Hosea describes a very subtle symptom of the moral awakening whether of the individual or of a community. The conscience of many a man, of many a kingdom, has been reached only through their pride. Pride is the last nerve which comfort and habit leave quick; and when summons to a man's better nature fail, it is still possible in most cases to touch his pride with the presentation of the facts of his decadence. This is probably what Hosea means. Israel's prestige suffers. The civilisation of

[1] v. 12, etc.
[2] iv. 2 ff.; vi. 7 ff., etc.
[3] vii. 7.
[4] ix. 11 ff.
[5] xii. 2.
[6] vii. 7.
[7] v. 5; vii. 10.
[8] See above, p. 261.

which they are proud has its open wounds. Their politicians are the sport of Egypt;[1] their wealth, the very gold of their Temple, is lifted by Assyria.[2] The nerve of pride was also touched in the prodigal: "How many hired servants of my father have enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger." Yet, unlike him, this prodigal son of God will not therefore return. Though there are grey hairs upon him, though strangers devour his strength, *he knoweth it not*; of him it cannot be said that "he has come to himself." And that is why the prophet threatens the further discipline of actual exile from the land and its fruits,[4] of bitter bread[5] and poverty[6] on an unclean soil. Israel must also eat husks and feed with swine before he arises and *returns to his God.*

But misery alone never led either man or nation to repentance: the sorrow of this world worketh only death. Repentance is the return to God; and it is the awakening to the truth about God, to the facts of His nature and His grace, which alone makes repentance possible. No man's doctrine of repentance is intelligible without his doctrine of God; and it is because Hosea's doctrine of God is so rich, so fair and so tender, that his doctrine of repentance is so full and gracious. Here we see the difference between him and Amos. Amos had also used the phrase with frequency; again and again he had appealed to the people to seek God and to return to God.[7] But from Amos it went forth only as a pursuing voice, a voice crying in the wilderness. Hosea lets loose behind it a heart, plies the people with gracious

[1] vii. 16.
[2] x. 5.
[3] vii. 10.
[4] ii. 16, etc.; ix. 2 ff., etc.
[5] ix. 4.
[6] xii. 10.
[7] iv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.

thoughts of God, and brings about them, not the voices only, but the atmosphere, of love. *I will be as the dew unto Israel*, promises the Most High; but He is before His promise. The chapters of Hosea are drenched with the dew of God's mercy, of which no drop falls on those of Amos, but there God is rather the roar as of a lion, the flash as of lightning. Both prophets bid Israel turn to God; but Amos means by that, to justice, truth and purity, while Hosea describes a husband, a father, long-suffering and full of mercy. "I bid you come back," cries Amos. But Hosea pleads, "If only you were aware of what God is, you would come back." "Come back to God and live," cries Amos; but Hosea, "Come back to God, for He is Love." Amos calls, "Come back at once, for there is but little time left till God must visit you in judgment"; but Hosea, "Come back at once, for God has loved you so long and so kindly." Amos cries, "Turn, for in front of you is destruction"; but Hosea, "Turn, for behind you is God." And that is why all Hosea's preaching of repentance is so evangelical. "I will arise and go *to my Father*."

But the *third* element of the new knowledge which means repentance is the conscience of guilt. *My Father, I have sinned.* On this point it might be averred that the teaching of Hosea is less spiritual than that of later prophets in Israel, and that here at last he comes short of the evangelical inwardness of the New Testament. There is truth in the charge; and here perhaps we feel most the defects of his standpoint, as one who appeals, not to the individual, but to the nation as a whole. Hosea's treatment of the sense of guilt cannot be so spiritual as that, say, of the fifty-first Psalm. But, at least, he is not satisfied to exhaust

it by the very thorough exposure which he gives us of the social sins of his day, and of their terrible results He, too, understands what is meant by a conscience of sin. He has called Israel's iniquity harlotry, unfaithfulness to God; and in a passage of equal insight and beauty of expression he points out that in the service of the Ba'alim Jehovah's people can never feel anything but a harlot's shame and bitter memories of the better past.

Rejoice not, O Israel, to the pitch of rapture like the heathen: for thou hast played the harlot from thine own God; 'tis hire thou hast loved on all threshing-floors. Floor and vat shall not acknowledge them; the new wine shall play them false.[1] Mere children of nature may abandon themselves to the riotous joy of harvest and vintage festivals, for they have never known other gods than are suitably worshipped by these orgies. But Israel has a past—the memory of a holier God, the conscience of having deserted Him for material gifts. With such a conscience she can never enjoy the latter; as Hosea puts it, they will not *acknowledge* or *take to*[2] her. Here there is an instinct of the profound truth, that even in the fulness of life conscience is punishment; by itself the sense of guilt is judgment.

But Hosea does not attack the service of strange gods only because it is unfaithfulness to Jehovah, but also because, as the worship of images, it is a senseless stupidity utterly inconsistent with that spiritual discernment of which repentance so largely consists. And with the worship of heathen idols Hosea equally condemns the worship of Jehovah under the form of images.

[1] ix. 1. See above, p. 279. [2] See above, p. 279, *n.* 4.

Hosea was the first in Israel to lead the attack upon the idols. Elijah had assaulted the worship of a foreign god, but neither he nor Elisha nor Amos condemned the worship of Israel's own God under the form of a calf. Indeed Amos, except in one doubtful passage,[1] never at all attacks idols or false gods. The reason is very obvious. Amos and Elijah were concerned only with the proclamation of God as justice and purity: and to the moral aspects of religion the question of idolatry is not relevant; the two things do not come directly into collision. But Hosea had deeper and more wide views of God, with which idolatry came into conflict at a hundred points. We know what Hosea's *knowledge of God* was—how spiritual, how extensive—and we can appreciate how incongruous idolatry must have appeared against it. We are prepared to find him treating the images, whether of the Baʿalim or of Jehovah, with that fine scorn which a passionate monotheism, justly conscious of its intellectual superiority, has ever passed upon the idolatry even of civilisations in other respects higher than its own. To Hosea the idol is an *ʿeseb, a made thing*.[2] It is made of the very silver and gold with which Jehovah Himself had endowed the people.[3] It is made only *to be cut off*[4] by the first invader! Chiefly, however, does Hosea's scorn fall upon the image under which Jehovah Himself was worshipped. *Thy Calf, O Samaria!*[5] he contemptuously calls it. *From Israel is it also*, as much as the Baʿalim. *A workman made it, and no god is it: chips shall the Calf of Samaria become!* In another place he mimics the *anxiety of Samaria for*

[1] v. 26.

[2] עֵגֶל from עָגַב, which in Job x. 8 is parallel to עשׂה.

[3] ii. 8. [4] viii. 4. [5] viii. 5.

their Calf; his people mourn for him, and his priestlings writhe for his glory, why?—*because it is going into exile:*[1] the gold that covers him shall be stripped for the tribute to Assyria. And once more: *They continue to sin; they make them a smelting of their silver, idols after their own modelling, smith's work all of it. To these things they speak! Sacrificing men* actually *kiss calves!*[2] All this is in the same vein of satire which we find grown to such brilliance in the great Prophet of the Exile.[3] Hosea was the first in whom it sparkled; and it was due to his conception of *the knowledge of God.* Its relevancy to his doctrine of repentance is this, that so spiritual an apprehension of God as repentance implies, so complete a *metanoia* or *change of mind*, is intellectually incompatible with idolatry. You cannot speak of repentance to men who *kiss calves* and worship blocks of wood. Hence he says: *Ephraim is wedded to idols: leave him alone.*[4]

There was more than idolatry, however, in the way of Israel's repentance. The whole of the national worship was an obstacle. Its formalism and its easy and mechanical methods of *turning to God* disguised the need of that moral discipline and change of heart, without which no repentance can be genuine. Amos had contrasted the ritualism of the time with the duty of civic justice and the service of the poor:[5] Hosea opposes to it leal love and the knowledge of God. *I will have leal love and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.*[6] It is characteristic of Hosea to class sacrifices with idols. Both are senseless and inarticulate, incapable of expressing or

[1] x. 5.
[2] xiii. 2.
[3] Isa. xli. ff.
[4] iv. 17.
[5] Amos v.
[6] vi. 6.

of answering the deep feelings of the heart. True repentance, on the contrary, is rational, articulate, definite. *Take with you words*, says Hosea, *and* so *return to Jehovah.*[1]

To us who, after twenty-five more centuries of talk, know painfully how words may be abused, it is strange to find them enforced as the tokens of sincerity. But let us consider against what the prophet enforces them. Against the *kissing of calves* and such mummery—worship of images that neither hear nor speak. Let us remember the inarticulateness of ritualism, how it stifles rather than utters the feelings of the heart. Let us imagine the dead routine of the legal sacrifices, their original symbolism worn bare, bringing forward to the young hearts of new generations no interpretation of their ancient and distorted details, reducing those who perform them to irrational machines like themselves. Then let us remember how our own Reformers had to grapple with the same hard mechanism in the worship of their time, and how they bade the heart of every worshipper *speak*—speak for itself to God with rational and sincere words. So in place of the frozen ritualism of the Church there broke forth from all lands of the Reformation, as though it were birds in springtime, a great burst of hymns and prayers, with the clear notes of the Gospel in the common tongue. So intolerable was the memory of what had been, that it was even enacted that henceforth no sacrament should be dispensed but the Word should be given to

[1] xiv. 2. Perhaps the curious expression at the close of the verse, *so will we render the calves of our lips*, or (as a variant reading gives) *fruit of our lips*, has the same intention. Articulate confession (or vows), these are the sacrifices, *the calves*, which are acceptable to God.

the people along with it. If we keep all these things in mind, we shall know what Hosea means when he says to Israel in their penitence, *Take with you words.*

No one, however, was more conscious of the danger of words. Upon the lips of the people Hosea has placed a confession of repentance, which, so far as the words go, could not be more musical or pathetic.[1] In every Christian language it has been paraphrased to an exquisite confessional hymn. But Hosea describes it as rejected. Its words are too easy; its thoughts of God and of His power to save are too facile. Repentance, it is true, starts from faith in the mercy of God, for without this there were only despair. Nevertheless in all true penitence there is despair. Genuine sorrow for sin includes a feeling of the irreparableness of the past, and the true penitent as he casts himself upon God does not dare to feel that he ever can be the same again. *I am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants.* Such necessary thoughts as these Israel does not mingle with her prayer. *Come and let us return to Jehovah, for He hath torn* only *that He may heal, and smitten* only *that He may bind up. He will revive us again in a couple of days, on the third day raise us up, that we may live before Him. Then shall we know if we hunt up to know the Lord. As soon as we seek Him we shall find Him: and He shall come upon us like winter-rain, and like the spring-rain pouring on the land.* This is too facile, too shallow. No wonder that God despairs of such a people. *What am I to make of thee, Ephraim?*[2]

Another familiar passage, the Parable of the Heifer,

[1] vi. 1-4.

[2] For the reasons for this interpretation see above, pp. 263 ff.

describes the same ambition to reach spiritual results without spiritual processes. *Ephraim is a broken-in heifer—one that loveth to tread* out the corn. *But I will pass upon her goodly neck. I will give Ephraim a yoke. Judah must plough. Jacob must harrow for himself.*[1] Cattle, being unmuzzled by law[2] at threshing time, loved this best of all their year's work. Yet to reach it they must first go through the harder and unrewarded trials of ploughing and harrowing. Like a heifer, then, which loved harvest only, Israel would spring at the rewards of penitence, the peaceable fruits of righteousness, without going through the discipline and chastisement which alone yield them. Repentance is no mere turning or even re-turning. It is a deep and an ethical process—the breaking up of fallow ground, the labour and long expectation of the sower, the seeking and waiting for Jehovah till Himself send the rain. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in proportion to love* (the love you have sown), *break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek Jehovah, until He come and rain righteousness upon us.*[3]

A repentance so thorough as this cannot but result in the most clear and steadfast manner of life. Truly it is a returning not by oneself, but *a returning by God*, and it leads to the *keeping of leal love and justice, and waiting upon God continually.*[4]

[1] x. 11. [2] See above, p. 288. [3] x. 12. [4] xii. 7.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SIN AGAINST LOVE

HOSEA i.—iii.; iv. 11 ff.; ix. 10 ff.; xi. 8 f.

THE Love of God is a terrible thing—that is the last lesson of the Book of Hosea. *My God will cast them away.*[1]

My God—let us remember the right which Hosea had to use these words. Of all prophets he was the first to break into the full aspect of the Divine Mercy—to learn and to proclaim that God is Love. But he was worthy to do so, by the patient love of his own heart towards another who for years had outraged all his trust and tenderness. He had loved, believed and been betrayed; pardoned and waited and yearned, and sorrowed and pardoned again. It is in this long-suffering that his breast beats upon the breast of God with the cry *My God.* As he had loved Gomer, so had God loved Israel, past hope, against hate, through ages of ingratitude and apostasy. Quivering with his own pain, Hosea has exhausted all human care and affection for figures to express the Divine tenderness, and he declares God's love to be deeper than all the passion of men, and broader than all their patience: *How can I give thee up, Ephraim? How can I let thee go, Israel? I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger.*

[1] x. 17.

For I am God, and not man. And yet, like poor human affection, this Love of God, too, confesses its failure—*My God shall cast them away.* It is God's sentence of relinquishment upon those who sin against His Love, but the poor human lips which deliver it quiver with an agony of their own, and here, as more explicitly in twenty other passages of the book, declare it to be equally the doom of those who outrage the love of their fellow men and women.

We have heard it said: "The lives of men are never the same after they have loved; if they are not better they must be worse." "Be afraid of the love that loves you: it is either your heaven or your hell." "All the discipline of men springs from their love—if they take it not so, then all their sorrow must spring from the same source." "There is a depth of sorrow, which can only be known to a soul that has loved the most perfect thing and beholds itself fallen." These things are true of the Love, both of our brother and of our God. And the eternal interest of the life of Hosea is that he learned how, for strength and weakness, for better for worse, our human and our Divine loves are inseparably joined.

I.

Most men learn that love is inseparable from pain where Hosea learned it—at home. There it is that we are all reminded that when love is strongest she feels her weakness most. For the anguish which love must bear, as it were from the foundation of the world, is the contradiction at her heart between the largeness of her wishes and the littleness of her power to realise them. A mother feels it, bending over the bed of her child, when its body is racked with pain or its breath

spent with coughing. So great is the feeling of her love that it ought to do something, that she will actually feel herself cruel because nothing can be done. Let the sick-bed become the beach of death, and she must feel the helplessness and the anguish still more as the dear life is now plucked from her and now tossed back by the mocking waves, and then drawn slowly out to sea upon the ebb from which there is no returning.

But the pain which disease and death thus cause to love is nothing to the agony that Sin inflicts when he takes the game into his unclean hands. We know what pain love brings, if our love be a fair face and fresh body in which Death brands his sores while we stand by, as if with arms bound. But what if our love be a childlike heart, and a frank expression and honest eyes, and a clean and clever mind. Our powerlessness is just as great and infinitely more tormented when Sin comes by and casts his shadow over these. Ah, that is Love's greatest torment when her children, who have run from her to the bosom of sin, look back and their eyes are changed! That is the greatest torment of Love—to pour herself without avail into one of those careless natures which seem capacious and receptive, yet never fill with love, for there is a crack and a leak at the bottom of them. The fields where Love suffers her sorest defeats are not the sick-bed and not death's margin, not the cold lips and sealed eyes kissed without response; but the changed eyes of children, and the breaking of "the full-orbed face," and the darkening look of growing sons and daughters, and the home the first time the unclean laugh breaks across it. To watch, though unable to soothe, a dear body racked with pain, is peace beside the awful vigil

of watching a soul shrink and blacken with vice, and your love unable to redeem it.

Such a clinical study Hosea endured for years. The prophet of God, we are told, brought a dead child to life by taking him in his arms and kissing him. But Hosea with all his love could not make Gomer a true, whole wife again. Love had no power on this woman —no power even at the merciful call to make all things new. Hosea, who had once placed all hope in tenderness, had to admit that Love's moral power is not absolute. Love may retire defeated from the highest issues of life. Sin may conquer Love.

Yet it is in this his triumph that Sin must feel the ultimate revenge. When a man has conquered this weak thing and beaten her down beneath his feet, God speaks the sentence of abandonment.

There is enough of the whipped dog in all of us to make us dread penalty when we come into conflict with the strong things of life. But it takes us all our days to learn that there is far more condemnation to them who offend the weak things of life, and particularly the weakest of all, its love. It was on sins against the weak that Christ passed His sternest judgments: *Woe unto him that offends one of these little ones; it were better for him that he had never been born.* God's little ones are not only little children, but all things which, like little children, have only love for their strength. They are pure and loving men and women—men with no weapon but their love, women with no shield but their trust. They are the innocent affections of our own hearts—the memories of our childhood, the ideals of our youth, the prayers of our parents, the faith in us of our friends. These are the little ones of whom Christ spake, that he who sins against them had

better never have been born. Often may the dear solicitudes of home, a father's counsels, a mother's prayers, seem foolish things against the challenges of a world, calling us to play the man and do as it does; often may the vows and enthusiasms of boyhood seem impertinent against the temptations which are so necessary to manhood: yet let us be true to the weak, for if we betray them, we betray our own souls. We may sin against law and maim or mutilate ourselves, but to sin against love is to be cast out of life altogether. He who violates the purity of the love with which God has filled his heart, he who abuses the love God has sent to meet him in his opening manhood, he who slights any of the affections, whether they be of man or woman, of young or of old, which God lays upon us as the most powerful redemptive forces of our life, next to that of His dear Son—he sinneth against his own soul, and it is of such that Hosea spake: *My God will cast them away.*

We talk of breaking law: we can only break ourselves against it. But if we sin against Love, we do destroy her; we take from her the power to redeem and sanctify us. Though in their youth men think Love a quick and careless thing—a servant always at their side, a winged messenger easy of despatch—let them know that every time they send her on an evil errand she returns with heavier feet and broken wings. When they make her a pander they kill her outright. When she is no more they waken to that which Gomer came to know, that love abused is love lost, and love lost means Hell.

II.

This, however, is only the margin from which Hosea

beholds an abandonment still deeper. All that has been said of human love and the penalty of outraging it is equally true of the Divine love and the sin against that.

The love of God has the same weakness which we have seen in the love of man. It, too, may fail to redeem; it, too, has stood defeated on some of the highest moral battle-fields of life. God Himself has suffered anguish and rejection from sinful men. "Herein," says a theologian, "is the mystery of this love, . . . that God can never by His Almighty Power compel that which is the very highest gift in the life of His creatures—love to Himself, but that He receives it as the free gift of His creatures, and that He is only able to allow men to give it to Him in a free act of their own will." So Hosea also has told us how God does not compel, but allure or *woo*, the sinful back to Himself. And it is the deepest anguish of the prophet's heart, that this free grace of God may fail through man's apathy or insincerity. The anguish appears in those frequent antitheses in which his torn heart reflects herself in the style of his discourse. *I have redeemed them—yet have they spoken lies against Me.*[1] *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness—they went to Baʿal-Peor.*[2] *When Israel was a child, then I loved him . . . but they sacrificed to Baʿalim.*[3] *I taught Ephraim to walk, but they knew not that I healed them.*[4] *How can I give thee up, Ephraim? how can I let thee go, O Israel? . . . Ephraim compasseth Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit.*[5]

We fear to apply all that we know of the weakness

[1] vii. 13. [2] ix. 10. [3] xi. 1, 2. [4] xi. 4. [5] xi. 8; xii. 1.

of human love to the love of God. Yet though He be God and not man, it was as man He commended His love to us. He came nearest us, not in the thunders of Sinai, but in Him Who presented Himself to the world with the caresses of a little child; Who met men with no angelic majesty or heavenly aureole, but whom when we saw we found nothing that we should desire Him, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form than the sons of men; Who came to His own and His own received Him not; Who, having loved His own that were in the world, loved them up to the end, and yet at the end was by them deserted and betrayed,—it is of Him that Hosea prophetically says: *I drew them with cords of a man and with bands of love.*

We are not bound to God by any unbreakable chain. The strands which draw us upwards to God, to holiness and everlasting life, have the weakness of those which bind us to the earthly souls we love. It is possible for us to break them. We love Christ, not because He has compelled us by any magic, irresistible influence to do so; but, as John in his great simplicity says, *We love Him because He first loved us.*

Now this is surely the terror of God's love—that it can be resisted; that even as it is manifest in Jesus Christ we men have the power, not only to remain, as so many do, outside its scope, feeling it to be far-off and vague, but having tasted it to fall away from it, having realised it to refuse it, having allowed it to begin its moral purposes in our lives to baffle and nullify these; to make the glory of Heaven absolutely ineffectual in our own characters; and to give our Saviour the anguish of rejection.

Give Him the anguish, yet pass upon ourselves the

doom! For, as I read the New Testament, the one unpardonable sin is the sin against our Blessed Redeemer's Love as it is brought home to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every other sin is forgiven to men but to crucify afresh Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. The most terrible of His judgments is "the wail of a heart wounded because its love has been despised": *Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!*

Men say they cannot believe in hell, because they cannot conceive how God may sentence men to misery for the breaking of laws they were born without power to keep. And one would agree with the inference, if God had done any such thing. But for them which are under the law and the sentence of death, Christ died once for all, that He might redeem them. Yet this does not make a hell less believable. When we see how Almighty was that Love of God in Christ Jesus, lifting our whole race and sending them forward with a freedom and a power of growth nothing else in history has won for them; when we prove again how weak it is, so that it is possible for millions of characters that have felt it to refuse its eternal influence for the sake of some base and transient passion; nay, when *I myself* know this power and this weakness of Christ's love, so that one day being loyal I am raised beyond the reach of fear and of doubt, beyond the desire of sin and the habit of evil, and the next day finds me capable of putting it aside in preference for some slight enjoyment or ambition—then I know the peril and the terror of this love, that it may be to a man either Heaven or Hell.

Believe then in hell, because you believe in the Love of God—not in a hell to which God condemns men of His will and pleasure, but a hell into which men cast themselves from the very face of His love in Jesus Christ. The place has been painted as a place of fires. But when we contemplate that men come to it with the holiest flames in their nature quenched, we shall justly feel that it is rather a dreary waste of ash and cinder, strewn with snow—some ribbed and frosted Arctic zone, silent in death, for there is no life there, and there is no life there because there is no Love, and no Love because men in rejecting or abusing her have slain their own power ever again to feel her presence.

MICAH

"But I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah
To declare to Jacob his transgressions, and to Israel his sin."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BOOK OF MICAH

THE Book of Micah lies sixth of the Twelve Prophets in the Hebrew Canon, but in the order of the Septuagint third, following Amos and Hosea. The latter arrangement was doubtless directed by the size of the respective books;[1] in the case of Micah it has coincided with the prophet's proper chronological position. Though his exact date be not certain, he appears to have been a younger contemporary of Hosea, as Hosea was of Amos.

The book is not two-thirds the size of that of Amos, and about half that of Hosea. It has been arranged in seven chapters, which follow, more or less, a natural method of division.[2] They are usually grouped in three sections, distinguishable from each other by their subject-matter, by their temper and standpoint, and to a less degree by their literary form. They are A. Chaps. i.—iii.; B. Chaps. iv., v.; C. Chaps. vi., vii.

There is no book of the Bible, as to the date of whose different parts there has been more discussion,

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[1] See above, pp. 6 f.

[2] Note that the Hebrew and English divisions do not coincide between chaps. iv. and v. In the Hebrew chap. iv. includes a fourteenth verse, which in the English stands as the first verse of chap. v. In this the English agrees with the Septuagint.

especially within recent years. The history of this is shortly as follows :—

Tradition and the criticism of the early years of this century accepted the statement of the title, that the book was composed in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah—that is, between 740 and 700 B.C. It was generally agreed that there were in it only traces of the first two reigns, but that the whole was put together before the fall of Samaria in 721.[1] Then Hitzig and Steiner dated chaps. iii.—vi. after 721; and Ewald denied that Micah could have given us chaps. vi., vii., and placed them under King Manasseh, *circa* 690—640. Next Wellhausen[2] sought to prove that vii. 7-20 must be post-exilic. Stade[3] took a further step, and, on the ground that Micah himself could not have blunted or annulled his sharp pronouncements of doom, by the promises which chaps. iv. and v. contain, he withdrew these from the prophet and assigned them to the time of the Exile.[4] But the sufficiency of this argument was denied by Vatke.[5] Also in opposition to Stade, Kuenen[6] refused to believe that Micah could have been content with the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem as his last word, that therefore much of chaps. iv. and v. is probably from himself, but since their argument is obviously broken and confused, we must look in them for interpolations, and he decides that such are iv. 6-8, 11-13, and the working up of v. 9-14. The famous passage in iv. 1-4 may have been Micah's, but was probably added by another. Chaps. vi. and vii. were written under Manasseh by some of the persecuted adherents of Jehovah.

We may next notice two critics who adopt an extremely

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[1] Caspari.

[2] In the fourth edition of Bleek's *Introduction.*

[3] *Z.A.T.W.*, Vols. I., III., IV.

[4] See also Cornill, *Einleitung*, 183 f. Stade takes iv. 1-4, iv. 11—v. 3, v. 6-14, as originally one prophecy (distinguished by certain catch-words and an outlook similar to that of Ezekiel and the great Prophet of the Exile), in which the two pieces iv. 5-10 and v. 4, 5, were afterwards inserted by the author of ii. 12, 13.

[5] *Einleitung in das A.T.*, pp. 690 ff.

[6] *Einleitung.*

conservative position. Von Ryssel,[1] as the result of a very thorough examination, declared that all the chapters were Micah's, even the much doubted ii. 12, 13, which have been placed by an editor of the book in the wrong position, and chap. vii. 7-20, which he agrees with Ewald can only date from the reign of Manasseh, Micah himself having lived long enough into that reign to write them himself. Another careful analysis by Elhorst[2] also reached the conclusion that the bulk of the book was authentic, but for his proof of this Elhorst requires a radical rearrangement of the verses, and that on grounds which do not always commend themselves. He holds chap. iv. 9-14 and v. 8 for post-exilic insertions. Driver[3] contributes a thorough examination of the book, and reaches the conclusions that ii. 12, 13, though obviously in their wrong place, need not be denied to Micah; that the difficulties of ascribing chaps. iv., v., to the prophet are not insuperable, nor is it even necessary to suppose in them interpolations. He agrees with Ewald as to the date of vi.—vii. 6, and, while holding that it is quite possible for Micah to have written them, thinks they are more probably due to another, though a confident conclusion is not to be achieved. As to vii. 7-20, he judges Wellhausen's inferences to be unnecessary. A prophet in Micah's or Manasseh's time may have thought destruction nearer than it actually proved to be, and, imagining it as already arrived, have put into the mouth of the people a confession suited to its circumstance. Wildeboer[4] goes further than Driver. He replies in detail to the arguments of Stade and Cornill, denies that the reasons for withdrawing so much from Micah are conclusive, and assigns to the prophet the whole book, with the exception of several interpolations.

We see, then, that all critics are practically agreed as to the presence of interpolations in the text, as well as to the occurrence of certain verses of the prophet

[1] *Untersuchungen über die Textgestalt u. die Echtheit des Buches Micha*, 1887.

[2] *De Profetie van Micha*, 1891, which I have not seen. It is summarised in Wildeboer's *Litteratur des A.T.*, 1895.

[3] *Introduction*, 1892.

[4] *Litteratur des A.T.*, pp. 148 ff.

out of their proper order. This indeed must be obvious to every careful reader as he notes the somewhat frequent break in the logical sequence, especially of chaps. iv. and v. All critics, too, admit the authenticity of chaps. i.—iii., with the possible exception of ii. 12, 13; while a majority hold that chaps. vi. and vii., whether by Micah or not, must be assigned to the reign of Manasseh. On the authenticity of chaps. iv. and v.—*minus* interpolations—and of chaps. vi. and vii., opinion is divided; but we ought not to overlook the remarkable fact that those who have recently written the fullest monographs on Micah[1] incline to believe in the genuineness of the book as a whole.[2] We may now enter for ourselves upon the discussion of the various sections, but before we do so let us note how much of the controversy turns upon the general question, whether after decisively predicting the overthrow of Jerusalem it was possible for Micah to add prophecies of her restoration. It will be remembered that we have had to discuss this same point with regard both to Amos and Hosea. In the case of the former we decided against the authenticity of visions of a blessed future which now close his book; in the case of the latter we decided for the authenticity. What were our reasons for this difference? They were, that the closing vision of the Book of Amos is not at all in harmony with the exclusively ethical spirit of the authentic prophecies; while the closing vision of the Book of

[1] Wildeboer (*De Profet Micha*), Von Ryssel and Elhorst.

[2] Cheyne, therefore, is not correct when he says ("Introduction" to second edition of Robertson Smith's *Prophets*, p. xxiii.) that it is "becoming more and more doubtful whether more than two or three fragments of the heterogeneous collection of fragments in chaps. iv.—vii. can have come from that prophet."

Hosea is not only in language and in ethical temper thoroughly in harmony with the chapters which precede it, but in certain details has been actually anticipated by these. Hosea, therefore, furnishes us with the case of a prophet who, though he predicted the ruin of his impenitent people (and that ruin was verified by events), also spoke of the possibility of their restoration upon conditions in harmony with his reasons for the inevitableness of their fall. And we saw, too, that the hopeful visions of the future, though placed last in the collection of his prophecies, need not necessarily have been spoken last by the prophet, but stand where they do because they have an eternal spiritual validity for the remnant of Israel.[1] What was possible for Hosea is surely possible for Micah. That promises come in his book, and closely after the conclusive threats which he gave of the fall of Jerusalem, does not imply that originally he uttered them all in such close proximity. That indeed would have been impossible. But considering how often the political prospect in Israel changed during Micah's time, and how far the city was in his day from her actual destruction—more than a century distant—it seems to be improbable that he should not (in whatever order) have uttered both threat and promise. And naturally, when his prophecies were arranged in permanent order, the promises would be placed after the threats.[2]

[1] See above, p. 311.

[2] Wildeboer seems to me to have good grounds for his reply to Stade's assertion that the occurrence of promises after the threats only blunts and nullifies the latter. "These objections," says Wildeboer, "raise themselves only against *the spoken*, but not against the written word." See, too, the admirable remarks he quotes from De Goeje.

First Section: Chaps. I.—III.

No critic doubts the authenticity of the bulk of these chapters. The sole question at issue is the date or (possibly) the dates of them. Only chap. ii. 12, 13, are generally regarded as out of place, where they now stand.

Chap. i. trembles with the destruction of both Northern Israel and Judah—a destruction either very imminent or actually in the process of happening. The verses which deal with Samaria, 6 ff., do not simply announce her inevitable ruin. They throb with the sense either that this is immediate, or that it is going on, or that it has just been accomplished. The verbs suit each of these alternatives: *And I shall set*, or *am setting*, or *have set*, *Samaria for a ruin of the field*, and so on. We may assign them to any time between 725 B.C., the beginning of the siege of Samaria by Shalmaneser, and a year or two after its destruction by Sargon in 721. Their intense feeling seems to preclude the possibility of their having been written in the years to which some assign them, 705—700, or twenty years after Samaria was actually overthrown.

In the next verses the prophet goes on to mourn the fact that the affliction of Samaria reaches even to the gate of Jerusalem, and he especially singles out as partakers in the danger of Jerusalem a number of towns, most of which (so far as we can discern) lie not between Jerusalem and Samaria, but at the other corner of Judah, in the Shephelah or out upon the Philistine plain.[1] This was the region which Sennacherib invaded in 701, simultaneously with his detachment of a corps to attack

[1] See below, pp. 383 ff.

the capital; and accordingly we might be shut up to affirm that this end of chap. i. dates from that invasion, if no other explanation of the place-names were possible. But another is possible. Micah himself belonged to one of these Shephelah towns, Moresheth-Gath, and it is natural that, anticipating the invasion of all Judah, after the fall of Samaria (as Isaiah[1] also did), he should single out for mourning his own district of the country. This appears to be the most probable solution of a very doubtful problem, and accordingly we may date the whole of chap. i. somewhere between 725 and 720 or 718. Let us remember that in 719 Sargon marched past this very district of the Shephelah in his campaign against Egypt, whom he defeated at Raphia.[2]

Our conclusion is supported by chap. ii. Judah, though Jehovah be planning evil against her, is in the full course of her ordinary social activities. The rich are absorbing the lands of the poor (vv. i. ff.): note the phrase *upon their beds*; it alone signifies a time of security. The enemies of Israel are internal (8). The public peace is broken by the lords of the land and men and women, disposed to live quietly, are robbed (8 ff.). The false prophets have sufficient signs of the times in their favour to regard Micah's threats of destruction as calumnies (6). And although he regards

[1] x. 18.

[2] Smend assigns the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in iii. 14, along with Isaiah xxviii.—xxxii., to 704—701, and suggests that the end of chap. i. refers to Sennacherib's campaign in Philistia in 701 (*A. T. Religionsgeschichte*, p. 225, *n.*). The former is possible, but the latter passage, following so closely on i. 6, which implies the fall of Samaria to be still recent, if not in actual course, is more suitably placed in the time of the campaign of Sargon over pretty much the same ground.

destruction as inevitable, it is not to be to-day ; but *in that day* (4), viz. some still indefinite date in the future, the blow will fall and the nation's elegy be sung. On this chapter, then, there is no shadow of a foreign invader. We might assign it to the years of Jotham and Ahaz (under whose reigns the title of the book places part of the prophesying of Micah), but since there is no sense of a double kingdom, no distinction between Judah and Israel, it belongs more probably to the years when all immediate danger from Assyria had passed away, between Sargon's withdrawal from Raphia in 719 and his invasion of Ashdod in 710, or between the latter date and Sennacherib's accession in 705.

Chap. iii. contains three separate oracles, which exhibit a similar state of affairs : the abuse of the common people by their chiefs and rulers, who are implied to be in full sense of power and security. They have time to aggravate their doings (4) ; their doom is still future—*then at that time* (*ib.*). The bulk of the prophets determine their oracles by the amount men give them (5), another sign of security. Their doom is also future (6 f.). In the third of the oracles the authorities of the land are in the undisturbed exercise of their judicial offices (9 f.), and the priests and prophets of their oracles (10), though all these professions practise only for bribe and reward. Jerusalem is still being built and embellished (9). But the prophet, not because there are political omens pointing to this, but simply in the force of his indignation at the sins of the upper classes, prophesies the destruction of the capital (10). It is possible that these oracles of chap. iii. may be later than those of the previous chapters.[1]

[1] See above, p. 363, *n.* 2.

Second Section: Chaps. IV., V.

This section of the book opens with two passages, verses 1-5 and verses 6, 7, which there are serious objections against assigning to Micah.

1. The first of these, 1-5, is the famous prophecy of the Mountain of the Lord's House, which is repeated in Isaiah ii. 2-5. Probably the Book of Micah presents this to us in the more original form.[1] The alternatives therefore are four: Micah was the author, and Isaiah borrowed from him; or both borrowed from an earlier source;[2] or the oracle is authentic in Micah, and has been inserted by a later editor in Isaiah; or it has been inserted by later editors in both Micah and Isaiah.

The last of these conclusions is required by the arguments first stated by Stade and Hackmann, and then elaborated, in a very strong piece of reasoning, by Cheyne. Hackmann, after marking the want of connection with the previous chapter, alleges the keynotes of the passage to be three: that it is not the arbitration of Jehovah,[3] but His sovereignty over foreign nations, and their adoption of His law, which the passage predicts; that it is the Temple at Jerusalem whose future supremacy is affirmed; and that there is a strong feeling against war. These, Cheyne contends, are the doctrines of a much later age than that of Micah; he holds the passage to be the work of a post-exilic imitator of the prophets, which was first

[1] So Hitzig ("ohne Zweifel"), and Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*; Ryssel, *op. cit.*, pp. 218 f. Hackmann (*Die Zukunftserwartung des Jesaia*, 127-8, *n.*) prefers the Greek of Micah. Ewald is doubtful. Duhm, however, inclines to authorship by Isaiah, and would assign the composition to Isaiah's old age.

[2] Hitzig; Ewald [3] As against Duhm.

intruded into the Book of Micah and afterwards borrowed from this by an editor of Isaiah's prophecies. It is just here, however, that the theory of these critics loses its strength. Agreeing heartily as I do with recent critics that the genuine writings of the early prophets have received some, and perhaps considerable, additions from the Exile and later periods, it seems to me extremely improbable that the same post-exilic insertion should find its way into *two* separate books. And I think that the undoubted bias towards the post-exilic period of all Canon Cheyne's recent criticism, has in this case hurried him past due consideration of the possibility of a pre-exilic date. In fact the gentle temper shown by the passage towards foreign nations, the absence of hatred or of any ambition to subject the Gentiles to servitude to Israel, contrasts strongly with the temper of many exilic and post-exilic prophecies ;[1] while the position which it demands for Jehovah and His religion is quite consistent with the fundamental principles of earlier prophecy. The passage really claims no more than a suzerainty of Jehovah over the heathen tribes, with the result only that their war with Israel and with one another shall cease, not that they shall become, as the great prophecy of the Exile demands, tributaries and servitors. Such a claim was no more than the natural deduction from the early prophets' belief of Jehovah's supremacy in righteousness. And although Amos had not driven the principle so far as to promise the absolute cessation of war, he also had recognised in the most unmistakable fashion the responsibility of the Gentiles to Jehovah, and His supreme arbitrament upon them.[2] And Isaiah himself,

[1] So rightly Duhm on Isa. ii. 2-4.

[2] Amos i. and ii. See above, pp. 124, 133.

in his prophecy on Tyre, promised a still more complete subjection of the life of the heathen to the service of Jehovah.[1] Moreover the fifth verse of the passage in Micah (though it is true its connection with the previous four is not apparent) is much more in harmony with pre-exilic than with post-exilic prophecy : *All the nations shall walk each in the name of his god, and we shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and aye.* This is consistent with more than one prophetic utterance before the Exile,[2] but it is not consistent with the beliefs of Judaism after the Exile. Finally, the great triumph achieved for Jerusalem in 701 is quite sufficient to have prompted the feelings expressed by this passage for the *mountain of the house of the Lord*; though if we are to bring it down to a date subsequent to 701, we must rearrange our views with regard to the date and meaning of the second chapter of Isaiah. In Micah the passage is obviously devoid of all connection, not only with the previous chapter, but with the subsequent verses of chap. iv. The possibility of a date in the eighth or beginning of the seventh century is all that we can determine with regard to it ; the other questions must remain in obscurity.

2. Verses 6, 7, may refer to the Captivity of Northern Israel, the prophet adding that when it shall be restored the united kingdom shall be governed from Mount Zion ; but a date during the Exile is, of course, equally probable.

3. Verses 8-13 contain a series of small pictures of Jerusalem in siege, from which, however, she issues

[1] Isa. xxiii. 17 f. [2] Jer. xvii.

triumphant.[1] It is impossible to say whether such a siege is actually in course while the prophet writes, or is pictured by him as inevitable in the near future. The words *thou shalt go to Babylon* may be, but are not necessarily, a gloss.

4. Chap. iv. 14—v. 8 again pictures such a siege of Jerusalem, but promises a Deliverer out of Bethlehem, the city of David.[2] Sufficient heroes will be raised up along with him to drive the Assyrians from the land, and what is left of Israel after all these disasters shall prove a powerful and sovereign influence upon the peoples. These verses were probably not all uttered at the same time.

5. Verses 9-14.—In prospect of such a deliverance the prophet returns to what chap. i. has already described and Isaiah frequently emphasises as the sin of Judah—her armaments and fortresses, her magic and idolatries, the things she trusted in instead of Jehovah. They will no more be necessary, and will disappear. The nations that serve not Jehovah will feel His wrath.

In all these oracles there is nothing inconsistent with authorship in the eighth century: there is much that witnesses to this date. Everything that they threaten or promise is threatened or promised by Hosea and by Isaiah, with the exception of the destruction (in ver. 12) of the Maççeboth, or sacred pillars,

[1] Wellhausen indeed thinks that ver. 8 presupposes that Jerusalem is already devastated, reduced to the state of a shepherd's tower in the wilderness. This, however, is incorrect. The verse implies only that the whole country is overrun by the foe, Jerusalem alone standing, with the flock of God in it, like a fortified fold (cf. Isaiah i.).

[2] Roorda, reasoning from the Greek text, takes *House of Ephratha* as the original reading, with Bethlehem added later; and Hitzig properly reads Ephrath, giving its final letter to the next word which improves the grammar, thus: אפרת הצעיר

against which we find no sentence going forth from Jehovah before the Book of Deuteronomy, while Isaiah distinctly promises the erection of a Maççebah to Jehovah in the land of Egypt.[1] But waiving for the present the possibility of a date for Deuteronomy, or for part of it, in the reign of Hezekiah, we must remember the destruction, which took place under this king, of idolatrous sanctuaries in Judah, and feel also that, in spite of such a reform, it was quite possible for Isaiah to introduce a Maççebah into his poetic vision of the worship of Jehovah in Egypt. For has he not also dared to say that the *harlot's hire* of the Phœnician commerce shall one day be consecrated to Jehovah?

Third Section: Chaps. VI., VII.

The style now changes. We have had hitherto a series of short oracles, as if delivered orally. These are succeeded by a series of conferences or arguments, by several speakers. Ewald accounts for the change by supposing that the latter date from a time of persecution, when the prophet, unable to speak in public, uttered himself in literature. But chap. i. is also dramatic.

1. Chap. vi. 1-8.—An argument in which the prophet as herald calls on the hills to listen to Jehovah's case against the people (1, 2). Jehovah Himself appeals to the latter, and in a style similar to Hosea's cites His deeds in their history, as evidence of what He seeks from them (3-5). The people, presumably penitent, ask how they shall come before Jehovah (6, 7). And the prophet tells them what Jehovah has declared in the matter (8). Opening very much like Micah's first

[1] Isa. xix. 19.

oracle (chap. i. 1), this argument contains nothing strange either to Micah or the eighth century. Exception has been taken to the reference in ver. 7 to the sacrifice of the first-born, which appears to have become more common from the gloomy age of Manasseh onwards, and which, therefore, led Ewald to date all chaps. vi. and vii. from that king's reign. But child-sacrifice is stated simply as a possibility, and—occurring as it does at the climax of the sentence—as an extreme possibility.[1] I see no necessity, therefore, to deny the piece to Micah or the reign of Hezekiah. Of those who place it under Manasseh, some, like Driver, still reserve it to Micah himself, whom they suppose to have survived Hezekiah and seen the evil days which followed.

2. Verses 9-16.—Most expositors[2] take these verses along with the previous eight, as well as with the six which follow in chap. vii. But there is no connection between verses 8 and 9; and 9-16 are better taken by themselves. The prophet heralds, as before, the speech of Jehovah to *tribe and city* (9). Addressing Jerusalem, Jehovah asks how He can forgive such fraud and violence as those by which her wealth has been gathered (10-12). Then addressing the people (note the change from feminine to masculine in the second personal pronouns) He tells them He must smite; they shall not enjoy the fruit of their labours (14, 15). They have sinned the sins of Omri and the house of Ahab (query—should it not be of Ahab and the house of Omri?), so that they must be put to shame before the Gentiles[3] (16). In this section three or four words have been marked

[1] So also Wellhausen.

[2] *E.g.* Ewald and Driver.

[3] For עמי read עמים with the LXX.

as of late Hebrew.[1] But this is uncertain, and the inference made from it precarious. The deeds of Omri and Ahab's house have been understood as the persecution of the adherents of Jehovah, and the passage has, therefore, been assigned by Ewald and others to the reign of the tyrant Manasseh. But such habits of persecution could hardly be imputed to the City or People as a whole; and we may conclude that the passage means some other of that notorious dynasty's sins. Among these, as is well known, it is possible to make a large selection—the favouring of idolatry, or the tyrannous absorption by the rich of the land of the poor (as in Naboth's case), a sin which Micah has already marked as that of his age. The whole treatment of the subject, too, whether under the head of the sin or its punishment, strongly resembles the style and temper of Amos. It is, therefore, by no means impossible for this passage also to have been Micah's, and we must accordingly leave the question of its date undecided. Certainly we are not shut up, as the majority of modern critics suppose, to a date under Manasseh or Amon.

3. Chap. vii. 1-6.—These verses are spoken by the prophet in his own name or that of the people's. The land is devastated; the righteous have disappeared; everybody is in ambush to commit deeds of violence and take his neighbour unawares. There is no justice: the great ones of the land are free to do what they like; they have intrigued with and bribed the autho-

[1] Wellhausen states four. But תושיה of ver. 9 is an uncertain reading. רמיה is found in Hosea vii. 16, though the text of this, it is true, is corrupt. זכה in another verbal form is found in Isa. i. 16. There only remains מטה, but again it is uncertain whether we should take this in its late sense of tribe.

rities. Informers have crept in everywhere. Men must be silent, for the members of their own families are their foes. Some of these sins have already been marked by Micah as those of his age (chap. ii.), but the others point rather to a time of persecution such as that under Manasseh. Wellhausen remarks the similarity to the state of affairs described in Mal. iii. 24 and in some Psalms. We cannot fix the date.

4. Verses 7-20.—This passage starts from a totally different temper of prophecy, and presumably, therefore, from very different circumstances. Israel, as a whole, speaks in penitence. She has sinned, and bows herself to the consequences, but in hope. A day shall come when her exiles shall return and the heathen acknowledge her God. The passage, and with it the Book of Micah, concludes by apostrophising Jehovah as the God of forgiveness and grace to His people. Ewald, and following him Driver, assign the passage, with those which precede it, to the times of Manasseh, in which of course it is possible that Micah was still active, though Ewald supposes a younger and anonymous prophet as the author. Wellhausen[1] goes further, and, while recognising that the situation and temper of the passage resemble those of Isaiah xl. ff., is inclined to bring it even further down to post-exilic times, because of the universal character of the Diaspora. Driver objects to these inferences, and maintains that a prophet in the time of Manasseh, thinking the destruction of Jerusalem to be nearer than it actually was, may easily have pictured it as having taken place, and put an ideal confession in the mouth of the people. It seems to me that all these critics have failed to appreciate a piece of evidence even more remarkable than

[1] And also Giesebrecht, *Beiträge*, p. 217.

any they have insisted on in their argument for a late date. This is, that the passage speaks of a restoration of the people only to Bashan and Gilead, the provinces overrun by Tiglath-Pileser III. in 734. It is not possible to explain such a limitation either by the circumstances of Manasseh's time or by those of the Exile. In the former surely Samaria would have been included; in the latter Zion and Judah would have been emphasised before any other region. It would be easy for the defenders of a post-exilic date, and especially of a date much subsequent to the Exile, to account for a longing after Bashan and Gilead, though they also would have to meet the objection that Samaria or Ephraim is not mentioned. But how natural it would be for a prophet writing soon after the captivity of Tiglath-Pileser III. to make this precise selection! And although there remain difficulties (arising from the temper and language of the passage) in the way of assigning all of it to Micah or his contemporaries, I feel that on the geographical allusions much can be said for the origin of this part of the passage in their age, or even in an age still earlier: that of the Syrian wars in the end of the ninth century, with which there is nothing inconsistent either in the spirit or the language of vv. 14-17. And I am sure that if the defenders of a late date had found a selection of districts as suitable to the post-exilic circumstances of Israel as the selection of Bashan and Gilead is to the circumstances of the eighth century, they would, instead of ignoring it, have emphasised it as a conclusive confirmation of their theory. On the other hand, ver. 11 can date only from the Exile, or the following years, before Jerusalem was rebuilt. Again, vv. 18-20 appear to stand by themselves.

It seems likely, therefore, that chap. vii. 7-20 is a Psalm composed of little pieces from various dates, which, combined, give us a picture of the secular sorrows of Israel, and of the conscience she ultimately felt in them, and conclude by a doxology to the everlasting mercies of her God.

CHAPTER XXV

MICAH THE MORASTHITE

MICAH i.

SOME time in the reign of Hezekiah, when the kingdom of Judah was still inviolate, but shivering to the shock of the fall of Samaria, and probably while Sargon the destroyer was pushing his way past Judah to meet Egypt at Raphia, a Judæan prophet of the name of Micah, standing in sight of the Assyrian march, attacked the sins of his people and prophesied their speedy overthrow beneath the same flood of war. If we be correct in our surmise, the exact year was 720—719 B.C. Amos had been silent thirty years, Hosea hardly fifteen; Isaiah was in the midway of his career. The title of Micah's book asserts that he had previously prophesied under Jotham and Ahaz, and though we have seen it to be possible, it is by no means proved, that certain passages of the book date from these reigns.

Micah is called the Morasthite.[1] For this designation there appears to be no other meaning than that of a native of Moresheth-Gath, a village mentioned by himself.[2] It signifies *Property* or *Territory* of Gath, and after the fall of the latter, which from this time no

[1] Micah i.; Jer. xxvi. 18. [2] i. 14.

more appears in history, Moresheth may have been used alone. Compare the analogous cases of Helkath (*portion of*—) Galilee, Ataroth, Chesulloth and Iim.[1]

In our ignorance of Gath's position, we should be equally at fault about Moresheth, for the name has vanished, were it not for one or two plausible pieces of evidence. Belonging to Gath, Moresheth must have lain near the Philistine border: the towns among which Micah includes it are situate in that region; and Jerome declares that the name—though the form, Morasthi, in which he cites it is suspicious—was in his time still extant in a small village to the east of Eleutheropolis or Beit-Jibrin. Jerome cites Morasthi as distinct from the neighbouring Mareshah, which is also quoted by Micah beside Moresheth-Gath.[2]

Moresheth was, therefore, a place in the Shephelah, or range of low hills which lie between the hill-country of Judah and the Philistine plain. It is the opposite exposure from the wilderness of Tekoa,[3] some seventeen miles away across the watershed. As the home of Amos is bare and desert, so the home of Micah is fair and fertile. The irregular chalk hills are

[1] Ataroth (Numb. xxxii. 3) is Atroth-Shophan (*ib.* 35); Chesulloth (Josh. xix. 18) is Chisloth-Tabor (*ib.* 12); Iim (Numb. xxxiii. 45) is Iye-Abarim (*ib.* 44).

[2] "Michæam de Morasthi qui usque hodie juxta Eleutheropolim, haud grandis est viculus."—Jerome, Preface to Micha. "Morasthi, unde fuit Micheas propheta, est autem vicus contra orientem Eleutheropoleos."—*Onomasticon*, which also gives "Maresa, in tribu Juda; cuius nunc tantummodo sunt ruinæ in secundo lapide Eleutheropoleos." See, too, the *Epitaphium S. Paulæ*: "Videam Morasthim sepulchrum quondam Michææ, nunc ecclesiam, et ex latere derelinquam Choræos, et Gitthæos et Maresam." The occurrence of a place bearing the name Property-of-Gath so close to Beit-Jibrin certainly strengthens the claims of the latter to be Gath. See *Hist. Geog.*, p. 196.

[3] See above, pp. 74 ff.

separated by broad glens, in which the soil is alluvial and red, with room for cornfields on either side of the perennial or almost perennial streams. The olive groves on the braes are finer than either those of the plain below or of the Judæan tableland above. There is herbage for cattle. Bees murmur everywhere, larks are singing, and although to-day you may wander in the maze of hills for hours without meeting a man or seeing a house, you are never out of sight of the traces of ancient habitation, and seldom beyond sound of the human voice—shepherds and ploughmen calling to their flocks and to each other across the glens. There are none of the conditions or of the occasions of a large town. But, like the south of England, the country is one of villages and homesteads, breeding good yeomen—men satisfied and in love with their soil, yet borderers with a far outlook and a keen vigilance and sensibility. The Shephelah is sufficiently detached from the capital and body of the land to beget in her sons an independence of mind and feeling, but so much upon the edge of the open world as to endue them at the same time with that sense of the responsibilities of warfare, which the national statesmen, aloof and at ease in Zion, could not possibly have shared.

Upon one of the westmost terraces of this Shephelah, nearly a thousand feet above the sea, lay Moresheth itself. There is a great view across the undulating plain with its towns and fortresses, Lachish, Eglon, Shaphir and others, beyond which runs the coast road, the famous war-path between Asia and Africa. Ashdod and Gaza are hardly discernible against the glitter of the sea, twenty-two miles away. Behind roll the round bush-covered hills of the Shephelah, with David's hold

at Adullam,[1] the field where he fought Goliath, and many another scene of border warfare; while over them rises the high wall of the Judæan plateau, with the defiles breaking through it to Hebron and Bethlehem.

The valley-mouth near which Moresheth stands has always formed the south-western gateway of Judæa, the Philistine or Egyptian gate, as it might be called, with its outpost at Lachish, twelve miles across the plain. Roads converge upon this valley-mouth from all points of the compass. Beit-Jibrin, which lies in it, is midway between Jerusalem and Gaza, about twenty-five miles from either, nineteen miles from Bethlehem and thirteen from Hebron. Visit the place at any point of the long history of Palestine, and you find it either full of passengers or a centre of campaign. Asa defeated the Ethiopians here. The Maccabees and John Hyrcanus contested Mareshah, two miles off, with the Idumeans. Gabinius fortified Mareshah. Vespasian and Saladin both deemed the occupation of the valley necessary before they marched upon Jerusalem. Septimius Severus made Beit-Jibrin the capital of the Shephelah, and laid out military roads, whose pavements still radiate from it in all directions. The *Onomasticon* measures distances in the Shephelah from Beit-Jibrin. Most of the early pilgrims from Jerusalem by Gaza to Sinai or Egypt passed through it, and it was a centre of Crusading operations whether against Egypt during the Latin kingdom or against Jerusalem during the Third Crusade. Not different was the place in the time of Micah. Micah must have seen pass by his

[1] For the situation of Adullam in the Shephelah see *Hist. Geog.*, p. 229.

door the frequent embassies which Isaiah tells us went down to Egypt from Hezekiah's court, and seen return those Egyptian subsidies in which a foolish people put their trust instead of in their God.

In touch, then, with the capital, feeling every throb of its folly and its panic, but standing on that border which must, as he believed, bear the brunt of the invasion that its crimes were attracting, Micah lifted up his voice. They were days of great excitement. The words of Amos and Hosea had been fulfilled upon Northern Israel. Should Judah escape, whose injustice and impurity were as flagrant as her sister's? It were vain to think so. The Assyrians had come up to her northern border. Isaiah was expecting their assault upon Mount Zion.[1] The Lord's Controversy was not closed. Micah will summon the whole earth to hear the old indictment and the still unexhausted sentence.

The prophet speaks:—

Hear ye, peoples[2] *all;*
Hearken, O Earth, and her fulness!

[1] Isa. x. 28 ff. This makes it quite conceivable that Micah i. 9, *it hath struck right up to the gate of Jerusalem*, was composed immediately after the fall of Jerusalem, and not, as Smend imagines, during the campaign of Sennacherib. Against the latter date there is the objection that by then the fall of Samaria, which Micah i. 6 describes as present, was already nearly twenty years past.

[2] The address is either to the tribes, in which case we must substitute *land* for *earth* in the next line; or much more probably it is to the Gentile *nations*, but in this case we cannot translate (as all do) in the third line that the Lord will be a witness *against* them, for the charge is only against Israel. They are summoned in the same sense as Amos summons a few of the nations in chap. iii. 9 ff. —The opening words of Micah are original to this passage, and interpolated in the exordium of the other Micah, 1 Kings xxii. 28.

That Jehovah may be among you to testify,
The Lord from His holy temple!
For, lo! Jehovah goeth forth from His place;
He descendeth and marcheth on the heights of the earth.[1]
Molten are the mountains beneath Him,
And the valleys gape open,
Like wax in face of the fire,
Like water poured over a fall.

God speaks :—

For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria?
And what is the sin of the house[2] *of Judah? is it not Jerusalem?*
Therefore do I turn Samaria into a ruin of the field,[3]
And into vineyard terraces;
And I pour down her stones to the glen,
And lay bare her foundations.[4]
All her images are shattered,
And all her hires are being burned in the fire;
And all her idols I lay desolate,
For from the hire of a harlot they were gathered,[5]
And to a harlot's hire they return.[6]

[1] Jehovah's *Temple* or *Place* is not, as in earlier poems, Sinai or Seir (cf. Deborah's song and Deut. xxxiii.), but Heaven (cf. Isaiah xix. or Psalm xxix.).

[2] So LXX. and other versions.

[3] Wellhausen's objections to this phrase are arbitrary and incorrect. A ruin in the midst of soil gone out of cultivation, where before there had been a city among vineyards, is a striking figure of desolation.

[4] Which is precisely how Herod's Samaria lies at the present day.

[5] So Ewald.

[6] It must be kept in mind that all the verbs in the above passage

The prophet speaks :—

For this let me mourn, let me wail,
Let me go barefoot and stripped (of my robe),
Let me make lamentation like the jackals,
And mourning like the daughters of the desert.[1]
For her stroke[2] *is desperate;*
Yea, it hath come unto Judah!
It hath smitten right up to the gate of my people.
Up to Jerusalem.

Within the capital itself Isaiah was also recording the extension of the Assyrian invasion to its walls, but in a different temper.[3] He was full of the exulting assurance that, although at the very gate, the Assyrian could not harm the city of Jehovah, but must fall when he lifted his impious hand against it. Micah has no such hope: he is overwhelmed with the thought of Jerusalem's danger. Provincial though he be, and full of wrath at the danger into which the politicians of Jerusalem had dragged the whole country, he profoundly mourns the peril of the capital, *the gate of my people*, as he fondly calls her. Therefore we must not exaggerate the frequently drawn contrast between Isaiah and himself.[4] To Micah also Jerusalem was dear, and his subsequent prediction of her overthrow[5] ought to be read with the accent of this previous

may as correctly be given in the future tense; in that case the passage will be dated just before the fall of Samaria, in 722-1, instead of just after.

[1] בנות יענה, that is, the ostriches: cf. Arab. wa'ana, "white, barren ground." The Arabs call the ostrich "father of the desert: abu sahârâ."

[2] LXX.

[3] Isa. x. 28 ff.

[4] It is well put by Robertson Smith's *Prophets*[2], pp. 289 ff.

[5] iii. 12.

mourning for her peril. Nevertheless his heart clings most to his own home, and while Isaiah pictures the Assyrian entering Judah from the north by Migron, Michmash and Nob, Micah anticipates invasion by the opposite gateway of the land, at the door of his own village. His elegy sweeps across the landscape so dear to him. This obscure province was even more than Jerusalem his world, the world of his heart. It gives us a living interest in the man that the fate of these small villages, many of them vanished, should excite in him more passion than the fortunes of Zion herself. In such a passion we can incarnate his spirit. Micah is no longer a book, or an oration, but flesh and blood upon a home and a countryside of his own. We see him on his housetop pouring forth his words before the hills and the far-stretching heathen land. In the name of every village within sight he reads a symbol of the curse that is coming upon his country, and of the sins that have earned the curse. So some of the greatest poets have caught their music from the nameless brooklets of their boyhood's fields; and many a prophet has learned to read the tragedy of man and God's verdict upon sin in his experience of village life. But there was more than feeling in Micah's choice of his own country as the scene of the Assyrian invasion. He had better reasons for his fears than Isaiah, who imagined the approach of the Assyrian from the north. For it is remarkable how invaders of Judæa, from Sennacherib to Vespasian and from Vespasian to Saladin and Richard, have shunned the northern access to Jerusalem and endeavoured to reach her by the very gateway at which Micah stood mourning. He had, too, this greater motive for his fear, that Sargon, as we have seen, was actually in

the neighbourhood, marching to the defeat of Judah's chosen patron, Egypt. Was it not probable that, when the latter was overthrown, Sargon would turn back upon Judah by Lachish and Mareshah? If we keep this in mind we shall appreciate, not only the fond anxiety, but the political foresight that inspires the following passage, which is to our Western taste so strangely cast in a series of plays upon place-names. The disappearance of many of these names, and our ignorance of the transactions to which the verses allude, often render both the text and the meaning very uncertain. Micah begins with the well-known play upon the name of Gath; the Acco which he couples with it is either the Phœnician port to the north of Carmel, the modern Acre, or some Philistine town, unknown to us, but in any case the line forms with the previous one an intelligible couplet: *Tell it not in Tell-town; Weep not in Weep-town.* The following Beth-le-ʿAphrah, *House of Dust*, must be taken with them, for in the phrase *roll thyself* there is a play upon the name Philistine. So, too, Shaphir, or Beauty, the modern Suafîr, lay in the Philistine region. Saʿanan and Beth-esel and Maroth are unknown; but if Micah, as is probable, begins his list far away on the western horizon and comes gradually inland, they also are to be sought for on the maritime plain. Then he draws nearer by Lachish, on the first hills, and in the leading pass towards Judah, to Moresheth-Gath, Achzib, Mareshah and Adullam, which all lie within Israel's territory and about the prophet's own home. We understand the allusion, at least, to Lachish in ver. 13. As the last Judæan outpost towards Egypt, and on a main road thither, Lachish would receive the Egyptian subsidies of horses and chariots, in which the poli-

ticians put their trust instead of in Jehovah. Therefore she *was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion.* And if we can trust the text of ver. 14, Lachish would pass on the Egyptian ambassadors to Moresheth-Gath, the next stage of their approach to Jerusalem. But this is uncertain. With Moresheth-Gath is coupled Achzib, a town at some distance from Jerome's site for the former, to the neighbourhood of which, Mareshah, we are brought back again in ver. 15. Adullam, with which the list closes, lies some eight or ten miles to the north-east of Mareshah.

The prophet speaks:—

Tell it not in Gath,
Weep not in Acco,[1]
In Beth-le-ʿAphrah[2] *roll thyself in dust.*
Pass over, inhabitress of Shaphir,[3] *thy shame uncovered!*
The inhabitress of Ṣaʿanan[4] *shall not march forth;*
The lamentation of Beth-esel[5] *taketh from you its standing.*
The inhabitress of Maroth[6] *trembleth for good,*

[1] LXX, ἐν Ἀκειμ; Heb. "weep not at all."

[2] לְעַפְרָה cannot be the Ophrah, עָפְרָה, of Benjamin. It may be connected with עָפָר, a gazelle; and it is to be noted that S. of Beit-Jibrin there is a wady now called El-Ghufr, the corresponding Arabic word. But, as stated in the text above, the name ought to be one of a Philistine town.

[3] Beauty town. This is usually taken to be the modern Suafir on the Philistine plain, 4½ miles S.E. of Ashdod, a site not unsuitable for identification with the Σαφειρ of the *Onom.*, "between Eleutheropolis and Ascalon," except that Σαφειρ is also described as "in the hill country." Guérin found the name Safar a very little N. of Beit-Jibrin (*Judée*, II. 317).

[4] March-town: perhaps the same as Ṣenan (צְנָן) of Josh. xv. 37; given along with Migdal-Gad and Hadashah; not identified.

[5] Unknown. [6] "Bitternesses": unknown.

For evil hath come down from Jehovah to the gate of Jerusalem.
Harness the horse to the chariot, inhabitress of Lachish,[1]
That hast been the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion;
Yea, in thee are found the transgressions of Israel.
Therefore thou givest . . .[2] *to Moresheth-Gath:*[3]
The houses of Achzib[4] shall *deceive the kings of Israel.*
Again shall I bring the Possessor [*conqueror*] *to thee, inhabitress of Mareshah;*[5]
To Adullam[6] *shall come the glory of Israel.*
Make thee bald, and shave thee for thy darlings;
Make broad thy baldness like the vulture,
For they go into banishment from thee.

This was the terrible fate which the Assyrian kept before the peoples with whom he was at war. Other foes raided, burned and slew: he carried off whole populations into exile.

Having thus pictured the doom which threatened his people, Micah turns to declare the sins for which it has been sent upon them.

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[1] Tell-el-Hesy.

[2] *Ambassadors* or *letters of dismissal.*

[3] See above, p. 376.

[4] Josh. xv. 44; mentioned with Keilah and Mareshah; perhaps the present Ain Kezbeh, 8 miles N.N.E. of Beit-Jibrin.

[5] מָרֵשָׁה, but in Josh. xv. 44 מראשה, which is identical with spelling of the present name of a ruin 1 mile S. of Beit-Jibrin. Μαρησα is placed by Eusebius (*Onom.*) 2 Roman miles S. of Eleutheropolis (= Beit-Jibrin).

[6] 6 miles N.E. of Beit-Jibrin.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PROPHET OF THE POOR

MICAH ii., iii.

WE have proved Micah's love for his countryside in the effusion of his heart upon her villages with a grief for their danger greater than his grief for Jerusalem. Now in his treatment of the sins which give that danger its fatal significance, he is inspired by the same partiality for the fields and the folk about him. While Isaiah chiefly satirises the fashions of the town and the intrigues of the court, Micah scourges the avarice of the landowner and the injustice which oppresses the peasant. He could not, of course, help sharing Isaiah's indignation for the fatal politics of the capital, any more than Isaiah could help sharing his sense of the economic dangers of the provinces;[1] but it is the latter with which Micah is most familiar and on which he spends his wrath. These so engross him, indeed, that he says almost nothing about the idolatry, or the luxury, or the hideous vice, which, according to Amos and Hosea, were now corrupting the nation.

Social wrongs are always felt most acutely, not in the town, but in the country. It was so in the days of Rome, whose earliest social revolts were agrarian.[2]

[1] Isa. v. 8.

[2] Mr. Congreve, in his Essay on Slavery appended to his edition

It was so in the Middle Ages: the fourteenth century saw both the Jacquerie in France and the Peasants' Rising in England; Langland, who was equally familiar with town and country, expends nearly all his sympathy upon the poverty of the latter, "the poure folk in cotes." It was so after the Reformation, under the new spirit of which the first social revolt was the Peasants' War in Germany. It was so at the French Revolution, which began with the march of the starving peasants into Paris. And it is so still, for our new era of social legislation has been forced open, not by the poor of London and the large cities, but by the peasantry of Ireland and the crofters of the Scottish Highlands. Political discontent and religious heresy take their start among industrial and manufacturing centres, but the first springs of the social revolt are nearly always found among rural populations.

Why the country should begin to feel the acuteness of social wrong before the town is sufficiently obvious. In the town there are mitigations, and there are escapes. If the conditions of one trade become oppressive, it is easier to pass to another. The workers are better educated and better organised; there is a middle class, and the tyrant dare not bring matters to so high a crisis. The might of the wealthy, too, is divided; the poor man's employer is seldom at the same time his landlord. But in the country power easily gathers into the hands of the few. The labourer's opportunities and means of work, his home, his very standing-ground, are often all of them the property of one man. In the

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of Aristotle's *Politics*, p. 496, points out that all the servile wars from which Rome suffered arose, not in the capital, but in the provinces, notably in Sicily.

country the rich have a real power of life and death, and are less hampered by competition with each other and by the force of public opinion. One man cannot hold a city in fee, but one man can affect for evil or for good almost as large a population as a city's, when it is scattered across a countryside.

This is precisely the state of wrong which Micah attacks. The social changes of the eighth century in Israel were peculiarly favourable to its growth.[1] The enormous increase of money which had been produced by the trade of Uzziah's reign threatened to overwhelm the simple economy under which every family had its croft. As in many another land and period, the social problem was the descent of wealthy men, land-hungry, upon the rural districts. They made the poor their debtors, and bought out the peasant proprietors. They absorbed into their power numbers of homes, and had at their individual disposal the lives and the happiness of thousands of their fellow-countrymen. Isaiah had cried, *Woe upon them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room* for the common people, and the inhabitants of the rural districts grow fewer and fewer.[2] Micah pictures the recklessness of those plutocrats—the fatal ease with which their wealth enabled them to dispossess the yeomen of Judah.

The prophet speaks :—

Woe to them that plan mischief,
And on their beds work out evil!
As soon as *morning breaks they put it into execution,*
For—it lies *to the power of their hands!*

[1] See above, pp. 32 ff. [2] Isa. v. 8.

They covet fields and—seize them,
Houses and—lift them up.
So they crush a good man and his home,
A man and his heritage.

This is the evil—the ease with which wrong is done in the country! *It lies to the power of their hands: they covet and seize.* And what is it that they get so easily—not merely field and house, so much land and stone and lime: it is human life, with all that makes up personal independence, and the security of home and of the family. That these should be at the mercy of the passion or the caprice of one man—this is what stirs the prophet's indignation. We shall presently see how the tyranny of wealth was aided by the bribed and unjust judges of the country; and how, growing reckless, the rich betook themselves, as the lords of the feudal system in Europe continually did, to the basest of assaults upon the persons of peaceful men and women. But meantime Micah feels that by themselves the economic wrongs explain and justify the doom impending on the nation. When this doom falls, by the Divine irony of God it shall take the form of a conquest of the land by the heathen, and the disposal of these great estates to the foreigner.

The prophet speaks:—

Therefore thus saith Jehovah:
Behold, I am planning evil against this race,
From which ye shall not withdraw your necks,
Nor walk upright;
For an evil time it is![1]

[1] Cf. Amos v. 13.

In that day shall they raise a taunt-song against you,
And wail out the wailing ("It is done");[1] *and say,*
"We be utterly undone:
My people's estate is measured off![2]
How they take it away from me![3]
To the rebel our fields are allotted."
So thou shalt have none to cast the line by lot
In the congregation of Jehovah.

No restoration at time of Jubilee for lands taken away in this fashion! There will be no congregation of Jehovah left!

At this point the prophet's pessimist discourse, that must have galled the rich, is interrupted by their clamour to him to stop.

The rich speak :—

Prate not, they prate, let none prate of such things!
Revilings will never cease!
O thou that speakest thus *to the house of Jacob,*[4]
Is the spirit of Jehovah cut short?
Or are such His doings?
Shall not His words mean well with him that walketh uprightly?

So the rich, in their immoral confidence that Jehovah was neither weakened nor could permit such a disaster

[1] "Fuit." But whether this is a gloss, as of the name of the dirge or of the tune, or a part of the text, is uncertain. Query: ונחה ינהה ואמר.

[2] So LXX., and adds: "with the measuring rope."

[3] Or (after the LXX.) *there is none to give it back to me.*

[4] Uncertain. "Is the house of Jacob . . . ?" (Wellhausen). "What a saying, O house of Jacob?" (Ewald and Guthe). In the latter case the interruption of the rich ceases with the previous line, and this one is the beginning of the prophet's answer to them.

to fall on His own people, tell the prophet that his sentence of doom on the nation, and especially on themselves, is absurd, impossible. They cry the eternal cry of Respectability: "God can mean no harm to the like of us! His words are good to them that walk uprightly—and we are conscious of being such. What you, prophet, have charged us with are nothing but natural transactions." The Lord Himself has His answer ready. Upright indeed! They have been unprovoked plunderers!

God speaks:—

But ye are the foes of My people,
Rising against those that are peaceful;
The mantle ye strip from them that walk quietly by,
Averse to war![1]
Women of My people ye tear from their happy homes,[2]
From their children ye take My glory for ever.
Rise and begone—for this is no resting-place!
Because of the uncleanness that bringeth destruction,
Destruction incurable.

Of the outrages on the goods of honest men, and the persons of women and children, which are possible in a time of peace, when the rich are tyrannous and

[1] So we may conjecture the very obscure details of a verse whose general meaning, however, is evident. For ואתמול read ואתם ל. The LXX. takes שלמה as *peace* and not as *cloak*, for which there seems to be no place beside אדר (or אדרת). Wellhausen with further alterations renders: "But ye come forward as enemies against My people; from good friends ye rob their . . . , from peaceful wanderers war-booty."

[2] Wellhausen reads בני for בית, "tenderly bred children," another of the many emendations which he proposes in the interests of complete parallelism. See the Preface to this volume.

abetted by mercenary judges and prophets, we have an illustration analogous to Micah's in the complaint of Peace in Langland's vision of English society in the fourteenth century. The parallel to our prophet's words is very striking: —

"And thanne come Pees into parlement · and put forth a bille,
How Wronge ageines his wille · had his wyf taken.
'Both my gees and my grys[1] · his gadelynges[2] feccheth;
I dar noughte for fere of hym · fyghte ne chyde.
He borwed of me bayard[3] · he broughte hym home nevre,
Ne no ferthynge ther-fore · for naughte I couthe plede.
He meynteneth his men · to marther myne hewen,[4]
Forstalleth my feyres[5] · and fighteth in my chepynge,
And breketh up my bernes dore · and bereth aweye my whete,
And taketh me but a taile[6] · for ten quarters of otes,
And yet he bet me ther-to · and lyth bi my mayde,
I nam[7] noughte hardy for hym · uneth[8] to loke.'"

They pride themselves that all is stable and God is with them. How can such a state of affairs be stable! They feel at ease, yet injustice can never mean rest. God has spoken the final sentence, but with a rare sarcasm the prophet adds his comment on the scene. These rich men had been flattered into their religious security by hireling prophets, who had opposed himself. As they leave the presence of God, having heard their sentence, Micah looks after them and muses in quiet prose.

The prophet speaks :—

Yea, if one whose walk is wind and falsehood were to try to cozen thee, saying, *I will babble to thee of wine and strong drink, then he might be the prophet of such a people.*

At this point in chap. ii. there have somehow slipped into the text two verses (12, 13), which all are agreed

[1] Little pigs. [3] A horse. [5] Fairs, markets. [7] Am not.
[2] Fellows. [4] Servants. [6] A tally. [8] Scarcely.

do not belong to it, and for which we must find another place.[1] They speak of a return from the Exile, and interrupt the connection between ver. 11 and the first verse of chap. iii. With the latter Micah begins a series of three oracles, which give the substance of his own prophesying in contrast to that of the false prophets whom he has just been satirising. He has told us what they say, and he now begins the first of his own oracles with the words, *But I said.* It is an attack upon the authorities of the nation, whom the false prophets flatter. Micah speaks very plainly to them. Their business is to know justice, and yet they love wrong. They flay the people with their exactions; they cut up the people like meat.

The prophet speaks:—*But I said,*

Hear now, O chiefs of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel:
Is it not yours to know justice?—
Haters of good and lovers of evil,
Tearing their hide from upon them
(he points to the people),
And their flesh from the bones of them;
And who devour the flesh of my people,
And their hide they have stripped from them
And their bones have they cleft,

[1] *I will gather, gather thee, O Jacob, in mass,*
I will bring, bring together the Remnant of Israel!
I will set them like sheep in a fold,
Like a flock in the midst of the pasture.
They shall hum with men!
The breach-breaker hath gone up before them:
They have broken the breach, have carried the gate, and are gone out by it;
And their king hath passed on before them, and Jehovah at their head.

And served it up as if from a pot,
Like meat from the thick of the caldron!
At that time shall they cry to Jehovah,
And He will not answer them;
But hide His face from them at that time,
Because they have aggravated their deeds.

These words of Micah are terribly strong, but there have been many other ages and civilisations than his own of which they have been no more than true. "They crop us," said a French peasant of the lords of the great Louis' time, "as the sheep crops grass." "They treat us like their food," said another on the eve of the Revolution.

Is there nothing of the same with ourselves? While Micah spoke he had wasted lives and bent backs before him. His speech is elliptic till you see his finger pointing at them. Pinched peasant-faces peer between all his words and fill the ellipses. And among the living poor to-day are there not starved and bitten faces—bodies with the blood sucked from them, with the Divine image crushed out of them? Brothers, we cannot explain all of these by vice. Drunkenness and unthrift do account for much; but how much more is explicable only by the following facts! Many men among us are able to live in fashionable streets and keep their families comfortable only by paying their employés a wage upon which it is impossible for men to be strong or women to be virtuous. Are those not using these as their food? They tell us that if they are to give higher wages they must close their business, and cease paying wages at all; and they are right if they themselves continue to live on the scale they do. As long as many families are maintained in

comfort by the profits of businesses in which some or all of the employés work for less than they can nourish and repair their bodies upon, the simple fact is that the one set are feeding upon the other set. It may be inevitable, it may be the fault of the system and not of the individual, it may be that to break up the system would mean to make things worse than ever—but all the same the truth is clear that many families of the middle class, and some of the very wealthiest of the land, are nourished by the waste of the lives of the poor. Now and again the fact is acknowledged with as much shamelessness as was shown by any tyrant in the days of Micah. To a large employer of labour, who was complaining that his employés, by refusing to live at the low scale of Belgian workmen, were driving trade from this country, the present writer once said: "Would it not meet your wishes if, instead of your workmen being levelled down, the Belgians were levelled up? This would make the competition fair between you and the employers in Belgium." His answer was, "I care not so long as I get my profits." He was a religious man, a liberal giver to his Church, and he died leaving more than one hundred thousand pounds.

Micah's tyrants, too, had religion to support them. A number of the hireling prophets, whom we have seen both Amos and Hosea attack, gave their blessing to this social system, which crushed the poor, for they shared its profits. They lived upon the alms of the rich, and flattered according as they were fed. To them Micah devotes the second oracle of chap. iii., and we find confirmed by his words the principle we laid down before, that in that age the one great difference between the false and the true prophet was what it has been

in every age since then till now— an ethical difference; and not a difference of dogma, or tradition, or ecclesiastical note. The false prophet spoke, consciously or unconsciously, for himself and his living. He sided with the rich; he shut his eyes to the social condition of the people; he did not attack the sins of the day. This made him *false*—robbed him of insight and the power of prediction. But the true prophet exposed the sins of his people. Ethical insight and courage, burning indignation of wrong, clear vision of the facts of the day—this was what Jehovah's spirit put into him, this was what Micah felt to be inspiration.

The prophet speaks :—

Thus saith Jehovah against the prophets who lead my people astray,
Who while they have ought between their teeth proclaim peace,
But against him who will not lay to their mouths they sanctify war!
Wherefore night shall be yours without vision,
And yours shall be darkness without divination;
And the sun shall go down on the prophets,
And the day shall darken about them;
And the seers shall be put to the blush,
And the diviners be ashamed:
All of them shall cover the beard,
For there shall be no answer from God.
But I—I am full of power by the spirit of Jehovah, and justice and might,
To declare to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel his sin.

In the third oracle of this chapter rulers and prophets are combined—how close the conspiracy

between them! It is remarkable that, in harmony with Isaiah, Micah speaks no word against the king. But evidently Hezekiah had not power to restrain the nobles and the rich. When this oracle was uttered it was a time of peace, and the lavish building, which we have seen to be so marked a characteristic of Israel in the eighth century,[1] was in process. Jerusalem was larger and finer than ever. Ah, it was a building of God's own city *in blood!* Judges, priests and prophets were all alike mercenary, and the poor were oppressed for a reward. No walls, however sacred, could stand on such foundations. Did they say that they built her so grandly, for Jehovah's sake? Did they believe her to be inviolate because He was in her? They should see. Zion—yes, Zion—should be ploughed like a field, and the Mountain of the Lord's Temple become desolate.

The prophet speaks :—

Hear now this, O chiefs of the house of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel,
Who spurn justice and twist all that is straight,
Building Zion in blood, and Jerusalem with crime!
Her chiefs give judgment for a bribe,
And her priests oracles for a reward,
And her prophets divine for silver;
And on Jehovah they lean, saying:
"Is not Jehovah in the midst of us?
Evil cannot come at us."
Therefore for your sakes shall Zion be ploughed like a field,
And Jerusalem become heaps,
And the Mount of the House mounds in a jungle.

[1] See above, p. 33.

It is extremely difficult for us to place ourselves in a state of society in which bribery is prevalent, and the fingers both of justice and of religion are gilded by their suitors. But this corruption has always been common in the East. "An Oriental state can never altogether prevent the abuse by which officials, small and great, enrich themselves in illicit ways."[1] The strongest government takes the bribery for granted, and periodically prunes the rank fortunes of its great officials. A weak government lets them alone. But in either case the poor suffer from unjust taxation and from laggard or perverted justice. Bribery has always been found, even in the more primitive and puritan forms of Semitic life. Mr. Doughty has borne testimony with regard to this among the austere Wahabees of Central Arabia. "When I asked if there were no handling of bribes at Hâyil by those who are nigh the prince's ear, it was answered, 'Nay.' The Byzantine corruption cannot enter into the eternal and noble simplicity of this people's (airy) life, in the poor nomad country; but (we have seen) the art is not unknown to the subtle-headed Shammar princes, who thereby help themselves with the neighbour Turkish governments."[2] The bribes of the ruler of Hâyil "are, according to the shifting weather of the world, to great Ottoman government men; and now on account of Kheybar, he was gilding some of their crooked fingers in Medina."[3] Nothing marks the difference of Western government more than the absence of all this, especially from our courts of justice. Yet the improvement has

[1] Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, translated by Black, pp. 134 f.

[2] *Arabia Deserta*, I. 607.

[3] *Id.*, II. 20.

only come about within comparatively recent centuries. What a large space, for instance, does Langland give to the arraigning of "Mede," the corrupter of all authorities and influences in the society of his day! Let us quote his words, for again they provide a most exact parallel to Micah's, and may enable us to realise a state of life so contrary to our own. It is Conscience who arraigns Mede before the King :—

"By ihesus with here jeweles · youre justices she shendeth,[1]
And lith[2] agein the lawe · and letteth hym the gate,
That feith may noughte have his forth[3] · here floreines go so thikke,
She ledeth the lawe as hire list · and lovedays maketh
And doth men lese thorw hire love · that law myghte wynne,
The mase[4] for a mene man · though he mote[5] hir eure.
Law is so lordeliche · and loth to make ende,
Without presentz or pens[6] · she pleseth wel fewe.

* * * * * *

For pore men mowe[7] have no powere · to pleyne[8] hem though thei smerte;
Suche a maistre is Mede · amonge men of gode."[9]

[1] Ruins.
[2] Lieth.
[3] Course.
[4] Confusion.
[5] Summon.
[6] Pence.
[7] May.
[8] Complain.
[9] Substance or property.

CHAPTER XXVII

ON TIME'S HORIZON

MICAH iv. 1-7.

THE immediate prospect of Zion's desolation which closes chap. iii. is followed in the opening of chap. iv. by an ideal picture of her exaltation and supremacy *in the issue of the days*. We can hardly doubt that this arrangement has been made of purpose, nor can we deny that it is natural and artistic. Whether it be due to Micah himself, or whether he wrote the second passage, are questions we have already discussed.[1] Like so many others of their kind, they cannot be answered with certainty, far less with dogmatism. But I repeat, I see no conclusive reason for denying either to the circumstances of Micah's times or to the principles of their prophecy the possibility of such a hope as inspires chap. iv. 1-4. Remember how the prophets of the eighth century identified Jehovah with supreme and universal righteousness; remember how Amos explicitly condemned the aggravations of war and slavery among the heathen as sins against Him, and how Isaiah claimed the future gains of Tyrian commerce as gifts for His sanctuary; remember how Amos heard His voice come forth from Jerusalem, and Isaiah counted upon the

[1] See above, pp. 365 ff.

eternal inviolateness of His shrine and city,—and you will not think it impossible for a third Judæan prophet of that age, whether he was Micah or another, to have drawn the prospect of Jerusalem which now opens before us.

It is the far-off horizon of time, which, like the spatial horizon, always seems a fixed and eternal line, but as constantly shifts with the shifting of our standpoint or elevation. Every prophet has his own vision of *the latter days*; seldom is that prospect the same. Determined by the circumstances of the seer, by the desires these prompt or only partially fulfil, it changes from age to age. The ideal is always shaped by the real, and in this vision of the eighth century there is no exception. This is not any of the ideals of later ages, when the evil was the oppression of the Lord's people by foreign armies or their scattering in exile; it is not, in contrast to these, the spectacle of the armies of the Lord of Hosts imbrued in the blood of the heathen, or of the columns of returning captives filling all the narrow roads to Jerusalem, *like streams in the south*; nor, again, is it a nation of priests gathering about a rebuilt temple and a restored ritual. But because the pain of the greatest minds of the eighth century was the contradiction between faith in the God of Zion as Universal Righteousness and the experience that, nevertheless, Zion had absolutely no influence upon surrounding nations, this vision shows a day when Zion's influence will be as great as her right, and from far and wide the nations whom Amos has condemned for their transgressions against Jehovah will acknowledge His law, and be drawn to Jerusalem to learn of Him. Observe that nothing is said of Israel going forth to teach the nations the law of the

Lord. That is the ideal of a later age, when Jews were scattered across the world. Here, in conformity with the experience of a still untravelled people, we see the Gentiles drawing in upon the Mountain of the House of the Lord. With the same lofty impartiality which distinguishes the oracles of Amos on the heathen, the prophet takes no account of their enmity to Israel; nor is there any talk—such as later generations were almost forced by the hostility of neighbouring tribes to indulge in—of politically subduing them to the king in Zion. Jehovah will arbitrate between them, and the result shall be the institution of a great peace, with no special political privilege to Israel, unless this be understood in ver. 5, which speaks of such security to life as was impossible, at that time at least, in all borderlands of Israel. But among the heathen themselves there will be a resting from war: the factions and ferocities of that wild Semitic world, which Amos so vividly characterised,[1] shall cease. In all this there is nothing beyond the possibility of suggestion by the circumstances of the eighth century or by the spirit of its prophecy.

A prophet speaks:—

And it shall come to pass in the issue of the days,[2]

[1] See above, Chap. VII.

[2] אחרית is the hindmost, furthest, ultimate, whether of space (Psalm cxxxix. 9: "the uttermost part of the sea"), or of time (Deut. xi. 12: "the end of the year"). It is the end as compared with the beginning, the sequel with the start, the future with the present (Job xlii. 12). In Proverbs it is chiefly used in the moral sense of issue or result. But it chiefly occurs in the phrase used here, אחרית הימים, not "the latter days," as A.V., nor ultimate days, for in these phrases lurks the idea of time having an end, but the *after-days* (Cheyne), or, better still, the *issue of the days*.

That the Mount of the House of Jehovah shall be
established on the tops [1] *of the mountains,*
And lifted shall it be above the hills,
And peoples shall flow to it,
And many nations shall go and say:
"Come, and let us up to the Mount of Jehovah,
And to the House of the God of Jacob,
That He may teach us of His ways,
And we will walk in His paths."
For from Zion goeth forth the law,
And the word of Jehovah from out of Jerusalem!
And He shall judge between many peoples,
And decide [2] *for strong nations far and wide;* [3]
And they shall hammer their swords into plough-
shares,
And their spears into pruning-hooks:
They shall not lift up, nation against nation, a sword,
And they shall not any more learn war.
Every man shall dwell under his vine
And under his fig-tree,
And none shall make afraid;
For the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts has spoken.

What connection this last verse is intended to have with the preceding is not quite obvious. It may mean that every family among the Gentiles shall dwell in peace; or, as suggested above, that with the voluntary disarming of the surrounding heathendom, Israel herself shall dwell secure, in no fear of border raids and slave-hunting expeditions, with which especially Micah's Shephelah and other borderlands were familiar. The verse does not occur in Isaiah's quotation of the three which precede it. We can scarcely suppose, fain though

[1] LXX. [2] Or *arbitrate.* [3] Literally: "up to far away."

we may be to do so, that Micah added the verse in order to exhibit the future correction of the evils he has been deploring in chap. iii.: the insecurity of the householder in Israel before the unscrupulous land-grabbing of the wealthy. Such are not the evils from which this passage prophesies redemption. It deals only, like the first oracles of Amos, with the relentlessness and ferocity of the heathen: under Jehovah's arbitrament these shall be at peace, and whether among themselves or in Israel, hitherto so exposed to their raids, men shall dwell in unalarmed possession of their houses and fields. Security from war, not from social tyranny, is what is promised.

The following verse (5) gives in a curious way the contrast of the present to that future in which all men will own the sway of one God. *For* at the present time *all the nations are walking each in the name of his God, but we go in the name of Jehovah for ever and aye.*

To which vision, complete in itself, there has been added by another hand, of what date we cannot tell, a further effect of God's blessed influence. To peace among men shall be added healing and redemption, the ingathering of the outcast and the care of the crippled.

In that day—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—
I will gather the halt,
And the cast-off I will bring in, and all *that I have afflicted;*
And I will make the halt for a Remnant,[1]
And her that was weakened[2] *into a strong people,*
And Jehovah shall reign over them
In the Mount of Zion from now and for ever.

[1] That which shall abide and be the stock of the future.
[2] LXX. *cast off.*

Whatever be the origin of the separate oracles which compose this passage (iv. 1-7), they form as they now stand a beautiful whole, rising from Peace through Freedom to Love. They begin with obedience to God and they culminate in the most glorious service which God or man may undertake, the service of saving the lost. See how the Divine spiral ascends. We have, first, Religion the centre and origin of all, compelling the attention of men by its historical evidence of justice and righteousness. We have the world's willingness to learn of it. We have the results in the widening brotherhood of nations, in universal Peace, in Labour freed from War, and with none of her resources absorbed by the conscriptions and armaments which in our times are deemed necessary for enforcing peace. We have the universal diffusion and security of Property, the prosperity and safety of the humblest home. And, finally, we have this free strength and wealth inspired by the example of God Himself to nourish the broken and to gather in the forwandered.

Such is the ideal world, seen and promised two thousand five hundred years ago, out of as real an experience of human sin and failure as ever mankind awoke to. Are we nearer the Vision to-day, or does it still hang upon time's horizon, that line which seems so stable from every seer's point of view, but which moves from the generations as fast as they travel to it?

So far from this being so, there is much in the Vision that is not only nearer us than it was to the Hebrew prophets, and not only abreast of us, but actually achieved and behind us, as we live and strive still onward. Yes, brothers, actually behind us! History has in part fulfilled the promised influence of religion upon the nations. The Unity of God has been

owned, and the civilised peoples bow to the standards of justice and of mercy first revealed from Mount Zion. *Many nations* and *powerful nations* acknowledge the arbitrament of the God of the Bible. We have had revealed that High Fatherhood of which every family in heaven and earth is named; and wherever that is believed the brotherhood of men is confessed. We have seen Sin, that profound discord in man and estrangement from God, of which all human hatreds and malices are the fruit, atoned for and reconciled by a Sacrifice in face of which human pride and passion stand abashed. The first part of the Vision is fulfilled. *The nations stream to the God of Jerusalem and His Christ.* And though to-day our Peace be but a paradox, and the "Christian" nations stand still from war not in love, but in fear of one another, there are in every nation an increasing number of men and women, with growing influence, who, without being fanatics for peace, or blind to the fact that war may be a people's duty in fulfilment of its own destiny or in relief of the enslaved, do yet keep themselves from foolish forms of patriotism, and by their recognition of each other across all national differences make sudden and unconsidered war more and more of an impossibility. I write this in the sound of that call to stand upon arms which broke like thunder upon our Christmas peace; but, amid all the ignoble jealousies and hot rashness which prevail, how the air, burned clean by that first electric discharge, has filled with the determination that war shall not happen in the interests of mere wealth or at the caprice of a tyrant! God help us to use this peace for the last ideals of His prophet! May we see, not that of which our modern peace has been far too full, mere freedom for the wealth of the few to

increase at the expense of the mass of mankind. May our Peace mean the gradual disarmament of the nations, the increase of labour, the diffusion of property, and, above all, the redemption of the waste of the people and the recovery of our outcasts. Without this, peace is no peace; and better were war to burn out by its fierce fires those evil humours of our secure comfort, which render us insensible to the needy and the fallen at our side. Without the redemptive forces at work which Christ brought to earth, peace is no peace; and the cruelties of war, that slay and mutilate so many, are as nothing to the cruelties of a peace which leaves us insensible to the outcasts and the perishing, of whom there are so many even in our civilisation.

One application of the prophecy may be made at this moment. We are told by those who know best and have most responsibility in the matter that an ancient Church and people of Christ are being left a prey to the wrath of an infidel tyrant, not because Christendom is without strength to compel him to deliver, but because to use the strength, would be to imperil the peace, of Christendom. It is an ignoble peace which cannot use the forces of redemption, and with the cry of Armenia in our ears the Unity of Europe is but a mockery.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE KING TO COME

MICAH iv. 8—v.

WHEN a people has to be purged of long injustice, when some high aim of liberty or of order has to be won, it is remarkable how often the drama of revolution passes through three acts. There is first the period of criticism and of vision, in which men feel discontent, dream of new things, and put their hopes into systems: it seems then as if the future were to come of itself. But often a catastrophe, relevant or irrelevant, ensues: the visions pale before a vast conflagration, and poet, philosopher and prophet disappear under the feet of a mad mob of wreckers. Yet this is often the greatest period of all, for somewhere in the midst of it a strong character is forming, and men, by the very anarchy, are being taught, in preparation for him, the indispensableness of obedience and loyalty. With their chastened minds he achieves the third act, and fulfils all of the early vision that God's ordeal by fire has proved worthy to survive. Thus history, when distraught, rallies again upon the Man.

To this law the prophets of Israel only gradually gave expression. We find no trace of it among the earliest of them; and in the essential faith of all there

was much which predisposed them against the conviction of its necessity. For, on the one hand, the seers were so filled with the inherent truth and inevitableness of their visions, that they described these as if already realised; there was no room for a great figure to rise before the future, for with a rush the future was upon them. On the other hand, it was ever a principle of prophecy that God is able to dispense with human aid. "In presence of the Divine omnipotence all secondary causes, all interposition on the part of the creature, fall away."[1] The more striking is it that before long the prophets should have begun, not only to look for a Man, but to paint him as the central figure of their hopes. In Hosea, who has no such promise, we already see the instinct at work. The age of revolution which he describes is cursed by its want of men: there is no great leader of the people sent from God; those who come to the front are the creatures of faction and party; there is no king from God.[2] How different it had been in the great days of old, when God had ever worked for Israel through some man—a Moses, a Gideon, a Samuel, but especially a David. Thus memory equally with the present dearth of personalities prompted to a great desire, and with passion Israel waited for a Man. The hope of the mother for her firstborn, the pride of the father in his son, the eagerness of the woman for her lover, the devotion of the slave to his liberator, the enthusiasm of soldiers for their captain—unite these noblest affections of the human heart and you shall yet fail to reach the passion and the glory with which prophecy looked for the King to Come. Each age, of course, expected him in

[1] Schultz, *A. T. Theol.*, p. 722. [2] See above, pp. 276 ff.

the qualities of power and character needed for its own troubles, and the ideal changed from glory unto glory. From valour and victory in war, it became peace and good government, care for the poor and the oppressed, sympathy with the sufferings of the whole people, but especially of the righteous among them, with fidelity to the truth delivered unto the fathers, and, finally, a conscience for the people's sin, a bearing of their punishment and a travail for their spiritual redemption. But all these qualities and functions were gathered upon an individual—a Victor, a King, a Prophet, a Martyr, a Servant of the Lord.

Micah stands among the first, if he is not the very first, who thus focussed the hopes of Israel upon a great Redeemer; and his promise of Him shares all the characteristics just described. In his book it lies next a number of brief oracles with which we are unable to trace its immediate connection. They differ from it in style and rhythm: they are in verse, while it seems to be in prose. They do not appear to have been uttered along with it. But they reflect the troubles out of which the Hero is expected to emerge, and the deliverance which He shall accomplish, though at first they picture the latter without any hint of Himself. They apparently describe an invasion which is actually in course, rather than one which is near and inevitable; and if so they can only date from Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 B.C. Jerusalem is in siege, standing alone in the land,[1] like one of those solitary towers with folds round them

[1] Wellhausen declares that this is unsuitable to the position of Jerusalem in the eighth century, and virtually implies her ruin and desolation. But, on the contrary, it is not so: Jerusalem is still standing, though alone (cf. the similar figure in Isa. i.). Conse-

which were built here and there upon the border pastures of Israel for defence of the flock against the raiders of the desert.[1] The prophet sees the possibility of Zion's capitulation, but the people shall leave her only for their deliverance elsewhere. Many are gathered against her, but he sees them as sheaves upon the floor for Zion to thresh. This oracle (vv. 11-13) cannot, of course, have been uttered at the same time as the previous one, but there is no reason why the same prophet should not have uttered both at different periods. Isaiah had prospects of the fate of Jerusalem which differ quite as much.[2] Once more (ver. 14) the blockade is established. Israel's ruler is helpless, *smitten on the cheek by the foe.*[3] It is to this last picture that the promise of the Deliverer is attached.

The prophet speaks:—

But thou, O Tower of the Flock,
Hill of the daughter of Zion,
To thee shall arrive the former rule,
And the *kingdom shall come to the daughter of Zion.*
Now wherefore criest thou so *loud?*

---

quently the contradiction which Wellhausen sees between this eighth verse and vv. 9, 10, does not exist. He grants that the latter may belong to the time of Sennacherib's invasion—unless it be a *vaticinium post eventum!*

[1] See above, p. 32.

[2] This in answer to Wellhausen, who thinks the two oracles incompatible, and that the second one is similar to the eschatological prediction common from Ezekiel onwards. Jerusalem, however, is surely still standing.

[3] Even Wellhausen agrees that this verse is most suitably dated from the time of Micah.

Is there no king in thee,[1] *or is thy counsellor perished,*
That throes have seized thee like a woman in child-birth?
Quiver and writhe, daughter of Zion, like one in childbirth:
For now must thou forth from the city,
And encamp on the field (and come unto Babel);[2]
There shalt thou be rescued,
There shall Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thy foes!

And now gather against thee many nations, that say,
"Let her be violate, that our eyes may fasten on Zion!"
But they know not the plans of Jehovah,
Nor understand they His counsel,
For He hath gathered them in like sheaves to the floor.
Up and thresh, O daughter of Zion!
For thy horns will I turn into iron,
And thy hoofs will I turn into brass;
And thou wilt beat down many nations,
And devote to Jehovah their spoil,
And their wealth to the Lord of all earth.

Now press thyself together, thou daughter of pressure:[3]
The foe *hath set a wall around us,*
With a rod they smite on the cheek Israel's regent!

[1] Those who maintain the exilic date understand by this Jehovah Himself. In any case it may be He who is meant.
[2] The words in parenthesis are perhaps a gloss.
[3] Uncertain.

But thou, Beth-Ephrath,[1] *smallest among the thousands*[2] *of Judah,*
From thee unto Me shall come forth the Ruler to be in Israel!
Yea, of old are His goings forth, from the days of long ago!
Therefore shall He suffer them till the time that one bearing shall have born.[3]
(*Then the rest of His brethren shall return with the children of Israel.*)[4]
And He shall stand and shepherd His flock[5] *in the strength of Jehovah,*
In the pride of the name of His God.
And they shall abide!
For now is He great to the ends of the earth.
And Such an One shall be our Peace.[6]

Bethlehem was the birthplace of David, but when Micah says that the Deliverer shall emerge from her he does not only mean what Isaiah affirms by his promise of a rod from the stock of Jesse, that the King to Come shall spring from the one great dynasty in Judah. Micah means rather to emphasise the rustic and popular origin of the Messiah, *too small to be among the thousands of Judah.* David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, was a dearer figure than Solomon son of David the King. He impressed the people's imagination, because he had sprung from themselves, and in

[1] The name Bethlehem is probably a later insertion. I read with Hitzig and others אפרת הצעיר, and omit להיות.

[2] Smallest form of district: cf. English *hundreds.*

[3] Cf. the prophecy of Immanuel, Isa. vii.

[4] This seems like a later insertion: it disturbs both sense and rhythm.

[5] So LXX.

[6] Take this clause from ver. 4 and the following oracle and put it with ver. 3.

his lifetime had been the popular rival of an unlovable despot. Micah himself was the prophet of the country as distinct from the capital, of the peasants as against the rich who oppressed them. When, therefore, he fixed upon Bethlehem as the Messiah's birthplace, he doubtless desired, without departing from the orthodox hope in the Davidic dynasty, to throw round its new representative those associations which had so endeared to the people their father-monarch. The shepherds of Judah, that strong source of undefiled life from which the fortunes of the state and prophecy itself had ever been recuperated, should again send forth salvation. Had not Micah already declared that, after the overthrow of the capital and the rulers, the glory of Israel should come to Adullam, where of old David had gathered its soiled and scattered fragments?

We may conceive how such a promise would affect the crushed peasants for whom Micah wrote. A Saviour, who was one of themselves, not born up there in the capital, foster-brother of the very nobles who oppressed them, but born among the people, sharer of their toils and of their wrongs!—it would bring hope to every broken heart among the disinherited poor of Israel. Yet meantime, be it observed, this was a promise, not for the peasants only, but for the whole people. In the present danger of the nation the class disputes are forgotten, and the hopes of Israel gather upon their Hero for a common deliverance from the foreign foe. *Such an One shall be our peace.* But in the peace He is *to stand and shepherd His flock*, conspicuous and watchful. The country-folk knew what such a figure meant to themselves for security and weal on the land of their fathers. Heretofore their rulers had not been shepherds, but thieves and robbers.

We can imagine the contrast which such a vision must have offered to the fancies of the false prophets. What were they beside this? Deity descending in fire and thunder, with all the other features of the ancient Theophanies that had now become so much cant in the mouths of mercenary traditionalists. Besides those, how sane was this, how footed upon the earth, how practical, how popular in the best sense!

We see, then, the value of Micah's prophecy for his own day. Has it also any value for ours—especially in that aspect of it which must have appealed to the hearts of those for whom chiefly Micah arose? "Is it wise to paint the Messiah, to paint Christ, so much as a working-man? Is it not much more to our purpose to remember the general fact of His humanity, by which He is able to be Priest and Brother to all classes, high and low, rich and poor, the noble and the peasant alike? Is not the Man of Sorrows a much wider name than the Man of Labour?" Let us answer these questions.

The value of such a prophecy of Christ lies in the correctives which it supplies to the Christian apocalypse and theology. Both of these have raised Christ to a throne too far above the actual circumstance of His earthly ministry and the theatre of His eternal sympathies. Whether enthroned in the praises of heaven, or by scholasticism relegated to an ideal and abstract humanity, Christ is lifted away from touch with the common people. But His lowly origin was a fact. He sprang from the most democratic of peoples. His ancestor was a shepherd, and His mother a peasant girl. He Himself was a carpenter: at home, as His parables show, in the fields and the folds and the barns of His country; with the servants of the great houses, with the unemployed in the market; with the

woman in the hovel seeking one piece of silver, with the shepherd on the moors seeking the lost sheep. *The poor had the gospel preached to them; and the common people heard Him gladly.* As the peasants of Judæa must have listened to Micah's promise of His origin among themselves with new hope and patience, so in the Roman empire the religion of Jesus Christ was welcomed chiefly, as the Apostles and the Fathers bear witness, by the lowly and the labouring of every nation. In the great persecution which bears his name, the Emperor Domitian heard that there were two relatives alive of this Jesus whom so many acknowledged as their King, and he sent for them that he might put them to death. But when they came, he asked them to hold up their hands, and seeing these brown and chapped with toil, he dismissed the men, saying, "From such slaves we have nothing to fear." Ah but, Emperor! it is just the horny hands of this religion that thou and thy gods have to fear! Any cynic or satirist of thy literature from Celsus onwards could have told thee that it was by men who worked with their hands for their daily bread, by domestics, artisans and all manner of slaves, that the power of this King should spread, which meant destruction to thee and thine empire! *From little Bethlehem came forth the Ruler,* and *now He is great to the ends of the earth.*

There follows upon this prophecy of the Shepherd a curious fragment which divides His office among a number of His order, though the grammar returns towards the end to One. The mention of Assyria stamps this oracle also as of the eighth century. Mark the refrain which opens and closes it.[1]

[1] Wellhausen alleges in the numbers another trace of the late Apocalyptic writings—but this is not conclusive.

When Asshûr cometh into our land,
And when he marcheth on our borders,[1]
Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds
And eight princes of men.
And they shall shepherd Asshûr with a sword,
And Nimrod's land with her own bare blades.
And He shall deliver from Asshûr,
When he cometh into our land,
And marcheth upon our borders.

There follows an oracle in which there is no evidence of Micah's hand or of his times; but if it carries any proof of a date, it seems a late one.

And the remnant of Jacob shall be among many peoples
Like the dew from Jehovah,
Like showers upon grass,
Which wait not for a man,
Nor tarry for the children of men.
And the remnant of Jacob (among nations,) among many peoples,
Shall be like the lion among the beasts of the jungle,
Like a young lion among the sheepfolds,
Who, when he cometh by, treadeth and teareth,
And none may deliver.
Let thine hand be high on thine adversaries,
And all thine enemies be cut off!

Finally in this section we have an oracle full of the notes we had from Micah in the first two chapters. It explains itself. Compare Micah ii. and Isaiah ii.

[1] So LXX. Cf. the refrain at the close.

And it shall be in that day—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—
That I will cut off thy horses from the midst of thee,
And I will destroy thy chariots;
That I will cut off the cities of thy land,
And tear down all thy fortresses,
And I will cut off thine enchantments from thy hand,
And thou shalt have no more soothsayers;
And I will cut off thine images and thy pillars from the midst of thee,
And thou shalt not bow down any more to the work of thy hands;
And I will uproot thine Asheras from the midst of thee,
And will destroy thine idols.
So shall I do, in My wrath and Mine anger,
Vengeance to the nations, who have not known Me.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE REASONABLENESS OF TRUE RELIGION

MICAH vi. 1-8.

WE have now reached a passage from which all obscurities of date and authorship[1] disappear before the transparence and splendour of its contents. "These few verses," says a great critic, "in which Micah sets forth the true essence of religion, may raise a well-founded title to be counted as the most important in the prophetic literature. Like almost no others, they afford us an insight into the innermost nature of the religion of Israel, as delivered by the prophets."

Usually it is only the last of the verses upon which the admiration of the reader is bestowed: *What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with thy God?* But in truth the rest of the passage differeth not in glory; the wonder of it lies no more in its peroration than in its argument as a whole.

The passage is cast in the same form as the opening chapter of the book—that of an Argument or Debate between the God of Israel and His people, upon the great theatre of Nature. The heart must be dull that does not leap to the Presences before which the trial is enacted.

[1] See above, pp. 369 ff.

The prophet speaks :—

Hear ye now that which Jehovah is saying;
Arise, contend before the mountains,
And let the hills hear thy voice!
Hear, O mountains, the Lord's Argument,
And ye, the everlasting! foundations of earth!

This is not mere scenery. In all the moral questions between God and man, the prophets feel that Nature is involved. Either she is called as a witness to the long history of their relations to each other, or as sharing God's feeling of the intolerableness of the evil which men have heaped upon her, or by her droughts and floods and earthquakes as the executioner of their doom. It is in the first of these capacities that the prophet in this passage appeals to the mountains and eternal foundations of earth. They are called, not because they are the biggest of existences, but because they are the most full of memories and associations with both parties to the Trial.

The main idea of the passage, however, is the Trial itself. We have seen more than once that the forms of religion which the prophets had to combat were those which expressed it mechanically in the form of ritual and sacrifice, and those which expressed it in mere enthusiasm and ecstasy. Between such extremes the prophets insisted that religion was knowledge and that it was conduct—rational intercourse and loving duty between God and man. This is what they figure in their favourite scene of a Debate which is now before us.

Jehovah hath a Quarrel with His People,
And with Israel He cometh to argue.

To us, accustomed to communion with the Godhead,

as with a Father, this may seem formal and legal. But if we so regard it we do it an injustice. The form sprang by revolt against mechanical and sensational ideas of religion. It emphasised religion as rational and moral, and at once preserved the reasonableness of God and the freedom of man. God spoke with the people whom He had educated: He pled with them, listened to their statements and questions, and produced His own evidences and reasons. Religion, such a passage as this asserts—religion is not a thing of authority nor of ceremonial nor of mere feeling, but of argument, reasonable presentation and debate. Reason is not put out of court: man's freedom is respected; and he is not taken by surprise through his fears or his feelings. This sublime and generous conception of religion, which we owe first of all to the prophets in their contest with superstitious and slothful theories of religion that unhappily survive among us, was carried to its climax in the Old Testament by another class of writers. We find it elaborated with great power and beauty in the Books of Wisdom. In these the Divine Reason has emerged from the legal forms now before us, and has become the Associate and Friend of Man. The Prologue to the Book of Proverbs tells how Wisdom, fellow of God from the foundation of the world, descends to dwell among men. She comes forth into their streets and markets, she argues and pleads there with an urgency which is equal to the urgency of temptation itself. But it is not till the earthly ministry of the Son of God, His arguments with the doctors, His parables to the common people, His gentle and prolonged education of His disciples, that we see the reasonableness of religion in all its strength and beauty.

In that free court of reason in which the prophets saw God and man plead together, the subjects were such as became them both. For God unfolds no mysteries, and pleads no power, but the debate proceeds upon the facts and evidences of life: the appearance of Character in history; whether the past be not full of the efforts of Love; whether God had not, as human wilfulness permitted Him, achieved the liberation and progress of His people.

God speaks:—

My people, what have I done unto thee?
And how have I wearied thee—answer Me!
For I brought thee up from the land of Miṣraim,
And from the house of slavery I redeemed thee.
I sent before thee Moses, Aharon and Miriam.
My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counselled,
And how he was answered by Bala'am, Be'or's son—
So that thou *mayest know the righteous deeds of Jehovah.*[1]

Always do the prophets go back to Egypt or the wilderness. There God made the people, there He redeemed them. In lawbook as in prophecy, it is the fact of redemption which forms the main ground of His appeal. Redeemed by Him, the people are not their own, but His. Treated with that wonderful love and patience, like patience and love they are called to bestow upon the weak and miserable beneath them.[2]

[1] Omitted from the above is the strange clause *from Shittim to Gilgal*, which appears to be a gloss.

[2] See the passages on the subject in Professor Harper's work on Deuteronomy in this series.

One of the greatest interpreters of the prophets to our own age, Frederick Denison Maurice, has said upon this passage: "We do not know God till we recognise him as a Deliverer; we do not understand our own work in the world till we believe we are sent into it to carry out His designs for the deliverance of ourselves and the race. The bondage I groan under is a bondage of the will. God is emphatically the Redeemer of the will. It is in that character He reveals Himself to us. We could not think of God at all as the God, the living God, if we did not regard Him as such a Redeemer. But if of my will, then of all wills: sooner or later I am convinced He will be manifested as the Restorer, Regenerator—not of something else, but of this—of the fallen spirit that is within us."

In most of the controversies which the prophets open between God and man, the subject on the side of the latter is his sin. But that is not so here. In the controversy which opens the Book of Micah the argument falls upon the transgressions of the people, but here upon their sincere though mistaken methods of approaching God. There God deals with dull consciences, but here with darkened and imploring hearts. In that case we had rebels forsaking the true God for idols, but here are earnest seekers after God, who have lost their way and are weary. Accordingly, as indignation prevailed there, here prevails pity; and though formally this be a controversy under the same legal form as before, the passage breathes tenderness and gentleness from first to last. By this as well as by the recollections of the ancient history of Israel we are reminded of the style of Hosea. But there is no expostulation, as in his book, with the people's continued devotion to ritual. All that is past, and a new

temper prevails. Israel have at last come to feel the vanity of the exaggerated zeal with which Amos pictures them exceeding the legal requirements of sacrifice;[1] and with a despair, sufficiently evident in the superlatives which they use, they confess the futility and weariness of the whole system, even in the most lavish and impossible forms of sacrifice. What then remains for them to do? The prophet answers with the beautiful words, that express an ideal of religion to which no subsequent century has ever been able to add either grandeur or tenderness.

The people speak:—

Wherewithal shall I come before Jehovah,
Shall I bow myself to God the Most High?
Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings,
With calves of one year?
Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams,
With myriads of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for a guilt-offering,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The prophet answers:—

He hath shown thee, O man, what is good;
And what is the LORD seeking from thee,
But to do justice and love mercy,
And humbly[3] *to walk with thy God?*

[1] See above, p. 161.

[2] See above, p. 370, on the futility of the argument which because of this line would put the whole passage in Manasseh's reign.

[3] This word הִצְנֵעַ is only once used again, in Prov. xi. 2, in another grammatical form, where also it might mean *humbly*. But the root-meaning is evidently *in secret*, or *secretly* (cf. the Aram. צְנַע, to be hidden; צְנִיעַ, one who lives noiselessly, humble, pious; in the feminine of a bride who is modest); and it is uncertain whether we should not take that sense here.

This is the greatest saying of the Old Testament; and there is only one other in the New which excels it:—

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SIN OF THE SCANT MEASURE

MICAH vi. 9—vii. 6.

THE state of the text of Micah vi. 9—vii. 6 is as confused as the condition of society which it describes: it is difficult to get reason, and impossible to get rhyme, out of the separate clauses. We had best give it as it stands, and afterwards state the substance of its doctrine, which, in spite of the obscurity of details, is, as so often happens in similar cases, perfectly clear and forcible. The passage consists of two portions, which may not originally have belonged to each other, but which seem to reflect the same disorder of civic life, with the judgment that impends upon it.[1] In the first of them, vi. 9-16, the prophet calls for attention to the voice of God, which describes the fraudulent life of Jerusalem, and the evils He is bringing on her. In the second, vii. 1-6, Jerusalem bemoans her corrupt society; but perhaps we hear her voice only in ver. 1, and thereafter the prophet's.

The prophet speaks:—

Hark! Jehovah crieth to the city!
('Tis salvation to fear Thy Name!)[2]

[1] See above, pp. 370 ff.

[2] Probably a later parenthesis. The word תּוּשִׁיָּה is one which, unusual in the prophets, the Wisdom literature has made its own Prov. ii. 7, xviii. 1; Job v. 12, etc. For *Thy* LXX. read *His*.

Hear ye, O tribe and council of the city! (?)[1]

God speaks:—

. . . in *the house of the wicked treasures of wickedness,*
And the scant measure accursed!
Can she be pure with the evil balances,
And with the bag of false weights,
Whose rich men are full of violence,[2]
And her citizens speak falsehood,
And their tongue is deceit in their mouth?
But I on My part have begun to plague thee,
To lay thee *in ruin because of thy sins.*
Thou eatest and art not filled,
But thy famine[3] *is in the very midst of thee!*

[1] Translation of LXX. emended by Wellhausen so as to read מועד העיר, the עיר being obtained by taking and transferring the עוד of the next verse, and relieving that verse of an unusual formation, viz. עוד before the interrogative האש. But for an instance of עוד preceding an interrogative see Gen. xix. 12.

[2] The text of the two preceding verses, which is acknowledged to be corrupt, must be corrected by the undoubted 3rd feminine suffix in this one—"*her* rich men." Throughout the reference must be to the city. We ought therefore to change האזכה of ver. 11 into התזכה, which agrees with the LXX. δικαιωθήσεται. Ver. 10 is more uncertain, but for the same reason that "the city" is referred to throughout vv. 9-12, it is possible that it is the nominative to זעומה; translate "cursed with the short measure." Again for אצרות LXX. read אוֹצֶרֶת אֹצְרוֹת, to which also the city would be nominative. And this suggests the query whether in the letters האש בית, that make little sense as they stand in the Massoretic Text, there was not originally another feminine participle. The recommendation of a transformation of this kind is that it removes the abruptness of the appearance of the 3rd feminine suffix in ver. 12.

[3] The word is found only here. The stem יחשׁ is no doubt the same as the Arabic verb waḥash, which in Form V. means "Inani ventre fuit præ fame; vacuum reliquit stomachum" (Freytag). In modern colloquial Arabic waḥsha means a "longing for an absent friend."

And but *try to remove,*[1] *thou canst not bring off;*
And what thou bringest off, I give to the sword.
Thou sowest, but never reapest;
Treadest olives, but never anointest with oil,
And must, but not to drink wine!
So thou keepest the statutes of Omri,[2]
And the habits of the house of Ahab,
And walkest in their principles,
Only *that I may give thee to ruin,*
And her inhabitants for sport—
Yea, the reproach of the Gentiles[3] *shall ye bear!*

Jerusalem speaks:—

Woe, woe is me, for I am become like sweepings of harvest,
Like gleanings of the vintage—
Not a cluster to eat, not *a fig that my soul lusteth after.*
Perished are the leal from the land,
Of the upright among men there is none:
All of them are lurking for blood;
Every man takes his brother in a net.
Their hands are on evil to do it thoroughly.[4]
The prince makes requisition,
The judge judgeth *for payment,*
And the great man he speaketh his lust;
So together *they weave it out.*
The best of them is but a thorn thicket,[5]

[1] Jussive. The objects removed can hardly be goods, as Hitzig and others infer; for it is to *the sword* they afterwards fall. They must be persons.

[2] LXX. *Zimri.*

[3] So LXX.; but Heb. *My people.*

[4] Uncertain.

[5] Cf. Prov. xv. 19.

The most upright worse *than a prickly hedge.*[1]
The day that thy sentinels saw, *thy visitation, draweth on;*
Now is their havoc[2] *come!*
Trust not any friend! Rely on no confidant!
From her that lies in thy bosom guard the gates of thy mouth.
For son insulteth father, daughter is risen against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
And the enemies of a man are the men of his house.

Micah, though the prophet of the country and stern critic of its life, characterised Jerusalem herself as the centre of the nation's sins. He did not refer to idolatry alone, but also to the irreligion of the politicians, and the cruel injustice of the rich in the capital. The poison which weakened the nation's blood had found its entrance to their veins at the very heart. There had the evil gathered which was shaking the state to a rapid dissolution.

This section of the Book of Micah, whether it be by that prophet or not, describes no features of Jerusalem's life which were not present in the eighth century; and it may be considered as the more detailed picture of the evils he summarily denounced. It is one of the most poignant criticisms of a commercial community which have ever appeared in literature. In

[1] Roorda, by rearranging letters and clauses (some of them after LXX.), and by changing points, gets a reading which may be rendered: *For evil are their hands! To do good the prince demandeth a bribe, and the judge, for the reward of the great, speaketh what he desireth. And they entangle the good more than thorns, and the righteous more than a thorn hedge.*

[2] Cf. Isa. xxii. 5.

equal relief we see the meanest instruments and the most prominent agents of covetousness and cruelty—the scant measure, the false weights, the unscrupulous prince and the venal judge. And although there are some sins denounced which are impossible in our civilisation, yet falsehood, squalid fraud, pitilessness of the everlasting struggle for life are exposed exactly as we see them about us to-day. Through the prophet's ancient and often obscure eloquence we feel just those shocks and sharp edges which still break everywhere through our Christian civilisation. Let us remember, too, that the community addressed by the prophet was, like our own, professedly religious.

The most widespread sin with which the prophet charges Jerusalem in these days of her commercial activity is falsehood: *Her inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceit in their mouth.* In Mr. Lecky's *History of European Morals* we find the opinion that "the one respect in which the growth of industrial life has exercised a favourable influence on morals has been in the promotion of truth." The tribute is just, but there is another side to it. The exigencies of commerce and industry are fatal to most of the conventional pretences, insincerities and flatteries, which tend to grow up in all kinds of society. In commercial life, more perhaps than in any other, a man is taken, and has to be taken, in his inherent worth. Business, the life which is called *par excellence* Busy-ness, wears off every mask, all false veneer and unction, and leaves no time for the cant and parade which are so prone to increase in all other professions. Moreover the soul of commerce is credit. Men have to show that they can be trusted before other men will traffic with them, at least upon that large and lavish scale

on which alone the great undertakings of commerce can be conducted. When we look back upon the history of trade and industry, and see how they have created an atmosphere in which men must ultimately seem what they really are; how they have of their needs replaced the jealousies, subterfuges, intrigues, which were once deemed indispensable to the relations of men of different peoples, by large international credit and trust; how they break through the false conventions that divide class from class, we must do homage to them, as among the greatest instruments of the truth which maketh free.

But to all this there is another side. If commerce has exploded so much conventional insincerity, it has developed a species of the genus which is quite its own. In our days nothing can lie like an advertisement. The saying "the tricks of the trade" has become proverbial. Every one knows that the awful strain and harassing of commercial life is largely due to the very amount of falseness that exists. The haste to be rich, the pitiless rivalry and competition, have developed a carelessness of the rights of others to the truth from ourselves, with a capacity for subterfuge and intrigue, which reminds one of nothing so much as that state of barbarian war out of which it was the ancient glory of commerce to have assisted mankind to rise. Are the prophet's words about Jerusalem too strong for large portions of our own commercial communities? Men who know these best will not say that they are. But let us cherish rather the powers of commerce which make for truth. Let us tell men who engage in trade that there are none for whom it is more easy to be clean and straight; that lies, whether of action or of speech, only in-

crease the mental expense and the moral strain of life; and that the health, the capacity, the foresight, the opportunities of a great merchant depend ultimately on his resolve to be true and on the courage with which he sticks to the truth.

One habit of falseness on which the prophet dwells is the use of unjust scales and short measures. The *stores* or fortunes of his day are *stores of wickedness*, because they have been accumulated by the use of the *lean ephah*, the *balances of wrong* and *the bag of false weights*. These are evils more common in the East than with us: modern government makes them almost impossible. But, all the same, ours is the sin of the scant measure, and the more so in proportion to the greater speed and rivalry of our commercial life. The prophet's name for it, *measure of leanness*, of *consumption* or *shrinkage*, is a proper symbol of all those duties and offices of man to man, the full and generous discharge of which is diminished by the haste and the grudge of a prevalent selfishness. The speed of modern life tends to shorten the time expended on every piece of work, and to turn it out untempered and incomplete. The struggle for life in commerce, the organised rivalry between labour and capital, not only puts every man on his guard against giving any other more than his due, but tempts him to use every opportunity to scamp and curtail his own service and output. You will hear men defend this parsimony as if it were a law. They say that business is impossible without the temper which they call "sharpness" or the habit which they call "cutting it fine." But such character and conduct are the very decay of society. The shrinkage of the units must always and everywhere mean the disintegration of the mass.

A society whose members strive to keep within their duties is a society which cannot continue to cohere. Selfishness may be firmness, but it is the firmness of frost, the rigour of death. Only the unselfish excess of duty, only the generous loyalty to others, give to society the compactness and indissolubleness of life. Who is responsible for the enmity of classes, and the distrust which exists between capital and labour? It is the workman whose one aim is to secure the largest amount of wages for the smallest amount of work, and who will, in his blind pursuit of that, wreck the whole trade of a town or a district; it is the employer who believes he has no duties to his men beyond paying them for their work the least that he can induce them to take; it is the customer who only and ever looks to the cheapness of an article—procurer in that prostitution of talent to the work of scamping which is fast killing art, and joy and all pity for the bodies and souls of our brothers. These are the true anarchists and breakers-up of society. On their methods social coherence and harmony are impossible. Life itself is impossible. No organism can thrive whose various limbs are ever shrinking in upon themselves. There is no life except by living to others.

But the prophet covers the whole evil when he says that the *pious are perished out of the land. Pious* is a translation of despair. The original means the man distinguished by "ḥesedh," that word which we have on several occasions translated *leal love*, because it implies not only an affection but loyalty to a relation. And, as the use of the word frequently reminds us, "ḥesedh" is love and loyalty both to God and to our fellow-men. We need not dissociate these: they are one. But

here it is the human direction in which the word looks. It means a character which fulfils all the relations of society with the fidelity, generosity and grace, which are the proper affections of man to man. Such a character, says the prophet, is perished from the land. Every man now lives for himself, and as a consequence preys upon his brother. *They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.* This is not murder which the prophet describes: it is the reckless, pitiless competition of the new conditions of life developed in Judah by the long peace and commerce of the eighth century. And he carries this selfishness into a very striking figure in ver. 4: *The best of them is as a thorn thicket, the most upright* worse *than a prickly hedge.* He realises exactly what we mean by sharpness and sharp-dealing: bristling self-interest, all points; splendid in its own defence, but barren of fruit, and without nest or covert for any life.

CHAPTER XXXI

OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS

MICAH vii. 7-20.

AFTER so stern a charge, so condign a sentence, confession is natural, and, with prayer for forgiveness and praise to the mercy of God, it fitly closes the whole book. As we have seen,[1] the passage is a cento of several fragments, from periods far apart in the history of Israel. One historical allusion suits best the age of the Syrian wars; another can only refer to the day of Jerusalem's ruin. In spirit and language the Confessions resemble the prayers of the Exile. The Doxology has echoes of several Scriptures.[2]

But from these fragments, it may be of many centuries, there rises clear the One Essential Figure: Israel, all her secular woes upon her; our Mother of Sorrows, at whose knees we learned our first prayers of confession and penitence. Other nations have been our teachers in art and wisdom and government. But she is our mistress in pain and in patience, teaching men with what conscience they should bear the chastening of the Almighty, with what hope and humility they should wait for their God. Surely not less lovable, but only more human, that her pale cheeks flush for

[1] Above, pp. 372 ff.

[2] Cf. with it Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7 (J); Jer. iii. 5, l. 20; Isa. lvii. 16; Psalms ciii. 9, cv. 9, 10.

a moment with the hate of the enemy and the assurance of revenge. Her passion is soon gone, for she feels her guilt to be greater; and, seeking forgiveness, her last word is what man's must ever be, praise to the grace and mercy of God.

Israel speaks:—

But I will look for the LORD,
I will wait for the God of my salvation:
My God will hear me!
Rejoice not, O mine enemy, at me:
If I be fallen, I rise;
If I sit in the darkness, the LORD is a light to me.

The anger of the LORD will I bear—
For I have sinned against Him—
Until that He take up my quarrel,
And execute my right.
He will carry me forth to the light;
I will look on His righteousness:
So shall mine enemy see, and shame cover her,
She that saith unto me, Where is Jehovah thy God?—
Mine eyes shall see her,
Now is she for trampling, like mire in the streets!

The prophet[1] responds:—

A day for the building of thy walls shall that day be!
Broad shall thy border be[2] *on that day!*

[1] It was a woman who spoke before, the People or the City. But the second personal pronouns to which this reply of the prophet is addressed are all masculine. Notice the same change in vi. 9-16 (above p 427).

[2] יִרְחַק־חֹק, Ewald: "distant the date." Notice the assonance. It explains the use of the unusual word for *border*. LXX. *thy border*. The LXX. also takes into ver. 11 (as above) the יום הוא of ver. 12.

. . . . . .[1] *and shall come to thee*
From Assyria unto Egypt, and from Egypt to the River,
And to Sea from Sea, and Mountain from Mountain;[2]
Though[3] *the land be waste on account of her inhabitants,*
Because of the fruit of their doings.

An Ancient Prayer :—

Shepherd Thy people with Thy staff,
The sheep of Thy heritage dwelling solitarily. . . .[4]
May they pasture in Bashan and Gilead as in days of old!
As in the days when Thou wentest forth from the land of Miṣraim, give us wonders to see!
Nations shall see and despair of all their might;
Their hands to their mouths shall they put,
Their ears shall be deafened.
They shall lick the dust like serpents;
Like worms of the ground from their fastnesses,
To Jehovah our God they shall come trembling,
And in fear before Thee!

[1] Something has probably been lost here.

[2] For ההר read מהר.

[3] It is difficult to get sense when translating the conjunction in any other way. But these two lines may belong to the following.

[4] The words omitted above are literally *jungle in the midst of gardenland* or *Carmel*. Plausible as it would be to take the proper name Carmel here along with Bashan and Gilead (see *Hist. Geog.*, 338), the connection prefers the common noun *garden* or *gardenland*: translate "dwelling alone like a bit of jungle in the midst of cultivated land." Perhaps the clause needs rearrangement: יערבתוככרמל, with a verb to introduce it. Yet compare יַעַר כַּרְמְלוֹ, 2 Kings xix. 23; Isa. xxxvii. 24.

A Doxology :—

Who is a God like to Thee? Forgiving iniquity,
And passing by transgression, to the remnant of His heritage;
He keepeth not hold of His anger for ever,
But One who delighteth in mercy is He;
He will come back, He will pity us,
He will tread under foot our iniquities—
Yea, Thou wilt cast to the depths of the sea every one of our sins.
Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, leal love to Abraham,
As Thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of yore.

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